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Govt allows Adani's Port in Andhra to import petroleum

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SPORTS

Gukesh loses to Liren in 12th game

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Thawing ties? India talks safety of Hindus in B'desh

Foreign Secretary says India is willing to work with Dhaka

DHAKA, 9 DEC

India raised its concerns over the safety of minorities in Bangladesh, flagging "regrettable incidents of attacks on cultural, religious and diplomatic properties" as Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met his counterpart here on Monday.

Misri, the first high-level Indian official to visit Bangladesh after 5 August when prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India following massive protests against her government, expressed New Delhi's desire for a "positive, constructive and mutually beneficial" relationship with Dhaka.

Misri said he underlined India's desire to work closely with the interim government of Bangladesh. He also called on Interim Government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain.

Misri emphasised that people are the main stakeholders in India-Bangladesh relations, and noted that India's development cooperation and multi-faceted engagements with Bangladesh, including in the areas of connectivity, trade, power, energy and capacity building, are all geared towards the benefit of the people of Bangladesh.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri with Chief Adviser of Bangladesh Muhammad Yunus during a meeting at Dhaka in Bangladesh on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

He said Delhi found no reason for disruption of the ties with Bangladesh's August political change.

Both sides covered political and security matters, border management, trade, commerce and connectivity, cooperation in water, power and energy sectors, development cooperation, consular, cultural and people-to-people ties, the MEA said. They exchanged views on sub-regional, regional and multilateral issues, and agreed to enhance consultations and cooperation to advance regional integration, including under the BIMSTEC framework.

The close ties between India and Bangladesh came under severe strain after Hasina was forced to leave the country in the face of a massive anti-government protest in August. Nobel Peace laureate Mohammad Yunus came to power days after Hasina fled to India. The relations deteriorated in recent weeks over attacks on Hindus and the arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das.

There have been a spate of incidents of violence against Hindus and other minorities, as well as attacks on temples in Bangladesh in the last few weeks. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

BELAGAVI SESSION

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, State Assembly Speaker UT Khader at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi **PTI**

Panchamasali quota: CM to present BJP's affidavit to SC

BELAGAVI, 9 DEC

In a bid to challenge the opposition BJP, which is supporting the Panchamasali Lingayats' protest for increased reservation, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced in the state Assembly that he would present the previous BJP government's affidavit to the Supreme Court regarding the matter.

Siddaramaiah's comments came ahead of a planned protest by the Panchamasali Lingayats, a sub-sect within the larger Veerashaiva-Lingayat community, seeking inclusion in the more advantageous category 2A (15 per cent) of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservation matrix. Currently, they are classified under category 3B, which offers only 5 per cent.

Responding to demands from senior BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal for a concrete decision on the matter, Siddaramaiah explained his willingness to support the Panchamasali Lingayats' requests but noted the procedural requirements involved. He emphasised that any community seeking reclassification would need to submit an application to the Permanent Backward Class Commission.

Siddaramaiah highlighted that the previous BJP administration had not elevated the

CM Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: PTI**

Panchamasali Lingayats to category 2A and instead had reallocated a 4 per cent reservation previously given to Muslims. The BJP's subsequent affidavit to the Supreme Court pledged to maintain this status quo.

As tensions escalated, some BJP MLAs urged the Chief Minister to present the actual affidavit to the House. In response, Siddaramaiah promised to submit all relevant Supreme Court documentation promptly. Home Minister G Parameshwara confirmed there would be no restrictions on the protest itself but stated that the planned arrival of 5,000 tractors would be prohibited due to potential disruptions to law and order at the Vidhana Soudha. He assured that while protests would be allowed, they must be conducted with restraint. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra is new RBI Guv

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The government on Monday appointed Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra as the 26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet cleared Malhotra's name, who has been appointed as the RBI Governor for three years, starting Wednesday.

Malhotra, a 1990 Batch Rajasthan Cadre IAS Officer, will replace Shaktikanta Das, whose tenure ends on Tuesday (December 10, 2024).

Malhotra, 56, will be the 26th RBI Governor. He is an engineering graduate in computer science from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and has a Master's in Public Policy from Princeton University, the US.

Sanjay Malhotra **PHOTO: X/ MOHANMAJHI**

In his career of over 33 years, he has worked in multifarious sectors, including power, finance and taxation, information technology, and mines, among others.

He is Secretary (Revenue) in the Ministry of Finance. In his previous assignment, he held the post of Secretary in the Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance. He plays an instrumental role in tax policy formulation in respect of direct, indirect taxes. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

Farmers halt march to Delhi

CHANDIGARH, 9 DEC

Punjab farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher announced that no groups of farmers will resume their foot march to Delhi on Tuesday, labelling the Centre's response to the protests as "confused." Following clashes with Haryana security personnel at the Shambhu border, which resulted in injuries among protesters, the foot march was suspended.

Pandher stated that the next course of action will be decided in a meeting with the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha on Tuesday. He expressed criticism towards Union minister Manohal Lal Khattar, who suggested that farmers should use vehicles to travel to Delhi, contrasting his earlier stance when he advocated for farmers to march on foot.

Farmers take rest after their Dilli Chalo march was suspended at Shambu border, in Patiala, Punjab, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Earlier attempts by farmers to march towards Delhi on 6-8 December were thwarted by security forces. They are advocating for a legal guarantee for the minimum support price (MSP), debt waivers, pensions, and withdrawal of police cases among other demands. *—PTI*

SYRIA CONFLICT

Govt functions amid challenges: Syrian PM

DAMASCUS, 9 DEC

Following the dramatic overthrow of President Bashar Assad, Syria's Prime Minister Mohammed Ghazi Jalali has stated that most cabinet ministers are still working from offices in Damascus. The rebel alliance, led by Ahmad al-Sharaa (formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani), has taken control, promising representative government and religious tolerance while vowing not to impose restrictions on women's dress.

Residents of Damascus, where life is slowly returning to normal, expressed cautious optimism, but the challenges ahead for the new leadership are evident. The situation remains complex, with the country still fragmented among various armed groups. Israel stepped up airstrikes on suspected chemical weapons sites and missile stockpiles to prevent them falling into extremist hands.

The UN human rights chief called for accountability for alleged war crimes committed during the Syrian civil conflict. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3, 6

India advocates inclusive process to bring stability

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

A day after Islamist rebels captured power in Syria, India on Monday called for a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process to bring stability in that country.

Ministry of External Affairs said it is monitoring the unfolding developments in Syria. "We underline the need for all parties to work towards preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria," MEA said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Rajya Sabha stalled amid uproar over Cong-Soros 'links'

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Rajya Sabha proceedings were disrupted several times on Monday as the treasury benches accused top Congress leaders of colluding with billionaire investor George Soros to destabilise the country, triggering protests from opposition members. The Upper House failed to transact any business as it saw three adjournments, including two during the pre-lunch session. It was finally adjourned for the day amid noisy protests from both sides. Soon after the House assembled for the day, members of treasury benches were on their feet, raising slogans and demanding answers from the Congress over reports of alleged links with Soros. *—PTI*

Manipur withdraws mobile internet ban in 9 districts

IMPHAL, 9 DEC

Manipur government on Monday withdrew the temporary suspension of mobile internet services in nine districts, according to an order issued by the state Home Department. The decision was taken after reviewing the prevailing law and order situation in Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Kakching, Jiribam, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi and Pherzawl districts and its co-relation with internet services, it said. Internet services were suspended in these districts on 16 November after violence broke out in the state following the recovery of the bodies of three women and three children in the Jiri and Barak rivers. *—PTI*

LETTER LEAKED

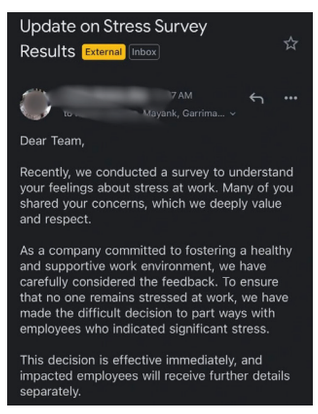
YesMadam fires staff for reporting stress in survey

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

YesMadam, a Noida-based home salon service provider, is under fire for allegedly firing over 100 employees via email after conducting a mental health survey. This was after a purported internal email leaked on social media suggesting the termination of staff who had indicated workplace stress, although many dubbed it a marketing gimmick for a possible campaign.

The email, sent by HR Manager Ashu Arora Jha, initially appeared supportive, stating, "We conducted a survey to understand your feelings about stress at work. Many of you shared your concerns, which we deeply value and respect." However, it shocked employees by announcing, "To ensure no one remains stressed at work, we have made the difficult decision to part ways with employees who indicated significant stress. This decision is effective immediately."

Anushka Dutta, an UX copywriter at the company, in a post said: "What's happening at YesMadam? First you conduct a random survey and then fire us overnight because we're feeling stressed?" She attached a screenshot which shows a mail from the company's HR official. *—Agencies*


Update on Stress Survey Results
External
Inbox
Dear Team,
Recently, we conducted a survey to understand your feelings about stress at work. Many of you shared your concerns, which we deeply value and respect.
As a company committed to fostering a healthy and supportive work environment, we have carefully considered the feedback. To ensure that no one remains stressed at work, we have made the difficult decision to part ways with employees who indicated significant stress.
This decision is effective immediately, and impacted employees will receive further details separately.

A purported internal email leaked on social media suggesting the termination of staff **PHOTO: X**

RAJNATH VISITS MOSCOW FOR DEFENCE TALKS

MOSCOW, 9 DEC

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Moscow for an official visit to attend the commissioning of INS Tushil, a stealth frigate, into the Indian Navy and the 21st India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation.

He was welcomed on Sunday night by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar and Russian Deputy Defence Minister Alexander Fomin. Singh will also pay tributes at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and engage with the Indian community. He will also hold discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin and co-chair the commission meeting with Defence Minister Andrei Belousov. *-Agencies*

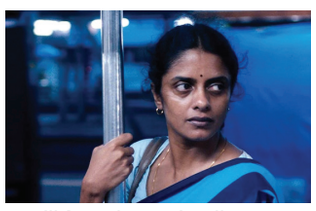
'All We Imagine As Light' gets Golden Globes nomination

NEW YORK CITY, 9 DEC

Payal Kapadia scored a historic nomination in the Best Director category for 'All We Imagine As Light' for the 82nd Golden Globe Awards. The acclaimed film was also nominated in the Best Motion Picture in a Non-English Language category. The nominations for the 82nd Golden Globe Awards were announced on Monday, by Mindy Kaling and Morris Chestnut.

After winning the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival, 'All We Imagine' As Light has been also shortlisted by France to represent the country at the Oscars 2025.

In the Best Non-English Language Motion Picture category, All We Imagine As Light will compete with French film Emilia Perez (which also won the most nominations at the 82nd Golden Globes), The Girl



A still from the movie 'All We Imagine As Light' **PHOTO: X**

With the Needle, I'm Still Here, The Seed of the Sacred Fig and Vermiglio. In the Best Director (Motion Picture) category, Payal Kapadia has been nominated alongside Jacques Audiard for Emilia Pérez, Sean Baker for Anora, Edward Berger for Conclave, Brady Corbet for The Brutalist, and Coralie Fargeat for The Substance. 'All We Imagine As Light', which released theatrically in India on 22 November, had earlier won accolades internationally. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

Economist, writer Prof Nataraj dead

MYSURU, 9 DEC

Prof VK Nataraj, an economist and academician, died at 85 after a prolonged illness. He is survived by two daughters. His mortal remains were brought to Mysuru from Chennai on Monday. He served as chairman of the Department of Development Studies at the University of Mysore. After retirement, he joined Madras Institute of Development Studies as a faculty member. He also served as visiting professor at the Indo-Canadian Study Centre and as an advisor to the World Bank. He was also a writer who has penned columns in leading newspapers, highlighting key developmental and economic challenges. His body will be donated to JSS Medical College.
—Salar News

Hydrochloric acid leaks from tanker near Mangaluru

MANGALURU, 9 DEC

An alleged technical fault has resulted in a hydrochloric acid leak from a gas tanker on National Highway 66 in Dakshina Kannada district on Monday, officials said. The gas tanker was transporting hydrochloric acid from Karwar to Kochi, and due to this leak nearby residents could face respiratory issues, they added. According to officials, the incident occurred at 5pm near Kotekar Uchila and the driver noticed the leak and promptly halted the vehicle. Preliminary inquiry has suggested that nearby residents could face respiratory issues due to the leak, a senior official said. Traffic along the highway is continuing as usual, and no specific advisories have been issued to local residents or commuters so far, he said. *—PTI*

Deworming can cure 70% anaemia cases: Expert

MYSURU, 9 DEC

Seventy per cent cases of the anaemia can be cured by treating worm infections in the victims, said Musuru District Health Officer Dr PC Kumaraswamy on Monday. He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the National Deworming Day function organised by the Department of Health and Family Welfare at Maharaja Composite Pre-University College in the city. Dr Kumaraswamy said his department is distributing tablets to treat worm infections among children in anganwadis and students from primary schools to first year undergraduate students. The department is aiming to cover about seven lakh children this year, he said. Besides weakening the heart, anaemia increases infection risk and causes reproductive issues, he said, adding that his department has also launched a 100-day drive for the detection of tuberculosis in the district among people of all age groups.
—Salar News

Biker crashes into Namma Metro pillar, dies

BENGALURU, 9 DEC

A 28-year-old office attendant died from serious injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident after losing control and crashing into a metro pillar in the Mahadevapura traffic police station jurisdiction. The deceased is Srikanth, a resident of Chinnayanapalya and an employee at a private firm. The incident occurred around 1.30am on Monday as Srikanth was riding home following a gathering with friends. Traffic police said he was speeding on Hoodi Main Road and suffered critical head injuries, exacerbated by the absence of a protective helmet. A passerby took him to Vaidehi Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.
—Salar News

Protests rock Belagavi Session on Day 1

Over 60 organisations, including those of farmers, protest outside Suvarna Vidhana Soudha

Speaker UT Khader, CM Siddaramaiah and others at the inauguration of an oil painting of Anubhava Mantapa, established by social reformer Basavanna, at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi on Monday **PHOTO: SALAR**

BELAGAVI, 9 DEC

Belagavi was rocked by protests on Monday as the Winter Session commenced at the Suvarna Vidhan Soudha. Over 60 organisations registered to voice their demands, with 11 of them protesting at two designated protest zones outside the Soudha campus.

To ensure smooth management, the police set up temporary protest zones with tents, drinking water units, and toilets.

Tensions escalated when police prevented members of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sena, two prominent farmers' organisations, from entering the Soudha campus. In protest, farmers who were put in a KSRTC bus by the police, tied the bus driver's hands with a green shawl to the steering wheel.

Belagavi Taluk President Appasaheb Desai said that long-standing, unmet demands drove the farmers' protest.

In addition to the farmers' protests, tensions also flared around the pro-Maharashtrian group Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), which had planned a rally to oppose the legislature session. Police denied permission for the event at Dharmaveer Sambhaji Chowk (Bogarves), citing security concerns. Despite this, nearly 100 MES activists, many of them sporting pro-Maharashtrian slogans, gathered at the venue in the morning. *—Salar News*

BJP flays Cong over portrait of Savarkar

Maharashtra BJP Chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Monday slammed the Congress government for deciding to remove the portrait of Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar from the Legislative Assembly there. He asked if Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray would remain silent or speak up over this act of his party's ally.

This is why Thackeray's party is being called "Tipu Sena", Bawankule said. *—PTI*

Declare Belagavi as UT since Marathas are supressed: Aaditya

PUNE, 9 DEC

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Monday alleged that injustice was being meted out to Marathi-speaking people in Belagavi, demanding that the region be declared a Union Territory.

As the Winter Session of the Karnataka Assembly begins on Monday, members of the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti are opposing it. The outfit organised a congregation in Belagavi, but the State government allegedly prohibited the gathering and banned leaders from Maharashtra from entering the state.

"Marathi-speaking people in Belagavi are being suppressed. Our party workers are being detained. The previous 'unconstitutional' chief minister had promised that they would give extra funds to the Marathi-speaking people living in the disputed territory. What happened to that assurance?" the MLA asked. *—PTI*

Three newly elected MLAs take oath

BELAGAVI, 9 DEC

Three newly elected Congress legislators took oath as members of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly here on Monday.

Soon after the Winter Session of the Assembly commenced at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha here, E Annapoorna, Yasir Ahmed Khan Pathan and CP Yogeeshwara—who were elected as MLAs in the by-polls to three segments—Sandur, Shiggaon and Channapatna respectively, took oath as legislators.

In the bypolls held on 13 November, Congress candidate Annapoorna, the wife of Bellary MP E Tukaram had won the seat vacated by her husband; while in Shiggaon Pathan had defeated former CM Basavaraj Bommai's son Bharath Bommai of BJP.

Yogeeshwara had won the Channapatna segment, defeating JD(S) candidate and Kumaraswamy's son Nikhil Kumaraswamy.

Congress' tally in the 224-member Assembly now stands at 136, other than the Speaker. *—PTI*

Congress MLA E Annapoorna with her MP husband E Tukaram in Assembly **PHOTO: SALAR**

Panchamasali seer upset over restrictions on protests in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 9 DEC

The Lingayat seer Jayamruthyunjaya Swami expressed his anger over the prohibitory orders imposed in Belagavi where the Winter Session of the legislature started on Monday. The seer had planned a tractor rally in the town on Tuesday, but the district administration clamped prohibitory orders, restricting the entry of tractors in town.

Meanhile, later the district administration, which had previously denied permission for the Panchamasalis to hold a tractor rally to the Suvarna Vidhan Soudha on Tuesday granted conditional approval. However, the use of tractors in the rally has been prohibited.

Jayamruthyunjaya Swami **PHOTO: X**

The pontiff of the Panchamasali Guru Peetha of Kudala Sangama has been pressing the successive governments to bring the Panchamasali community under the 2A category of the Other Backward Castes since December 2012. Her said such restrictions were uncalled for when he was carrying out a protest in a democratic way.
—Salar News with Agencies

HC RELIEF

Darshan's interim bail extended

BENGALURU, 9 DEC

High Court on Monday extended the interim bail of Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who is an accused in the murder of Renukaswamy, until the next hearing. This came despite the City police's preparations to challenge the bail granted earlier.

The bail plea was heard by a single-judge bench led by Justice S Vishwajith Shetty. Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) P Prasanna Kumar strongly argued against the extension, presenting multiple pieces of evidence to highlight the severity of the crime. The prosecution contended that Renukaswamy was lured under false pretences, kidnapped, and brutally assaulted, leading to his death.

The SPP claimed that

Actor Darshan **PHOTO: SALAR**

Darshan was directly involved in the assault, citing eyewitness testimonies and forensic evidence. It was alleged that Darshan attacked Renukaswamy, accusing him of messaging his friend, Pavithra Gowda, and inflicted severe injuries, including blows to vital areas. The prosecution further highlighted that Renukaswamy's blood was found on Darshan's clothes and shoes, as well as at the crime scene. *—Salar News*

322 newborns die in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 9 DEC

The Health Department reported an increase in maternal and infant mortality in Belagavi, with 29 pregnant women dying between April and October 2024 and 322 newborns losing their lives over the past year. These deaths occurred across various hospitals in the region, including the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS).

Minister for Women and Child Welfare Department Lakshmi Hebbalkar said that the government has ordered a departmental inquiry.

Shankarappa Gaded, the District Health in charge, said that the maternal fatalities occurred due to anaemia, pneumonia, low birth weight and premature delivery. He claimed that these deaths were not the result of medical negligence or adverse effects of treatment.

Of the 322 newborns that died from January to

The deaths occurred across various hospitals in the region, including the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences **PHOTO: X**

December 2024, 172 are from the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS).

Gaded noted that many of the newborns who died in government hospitals had been referred from private hospitals, where the survival chances of the babies were deemed extremely low.

Opposition leaders, including R Ashoka and BY Vijayendra, visited BIMS and demanded a judicial inquiry into the rising number of maternal and infant deaths. Ashoka criticized the government's handling of the healthcare system, stating, "Not Congress, but medical mafia is ruling the State."
—Salar News

3,000 MATERNAL DEATHS IN PAST FIVE YEARS: CMO

BENGALURU, 9 DEC

There have been 3,364 maternal deaths in the last five years, the Chief Minister's Office said on Monday. The fatalities have been on the decline during this period, according to data issued by the government.

The CMO's releasing the data comes in the wake of a controversy surrounding the recent maternal deaths in the state's Ballari district.

An analysis of the data reveals the highest number of maternal deaths occurred during Covid-19 when BJP was in power.

In 2019-2020, 662 maternal deaths were reported, with the number rising slightly to 714 the following year. *— PTI*

MUDA: Activist wants builder arrested

MYSURU, 9 DEC

RTI activist and MUDA complainant, Snehamayi Krishna, on Monday urged the Lokayukta to arrest builder Manjunath, who is accused of securing an alternative site after paying just Rs 3,000 to MUDA. Speaking to reporters, Krishna alleged that MUDA has preferentially distributed sites to builders through General Power of Attorney (GPA) rather than to legiti-

Snehamayi Krishna **PHOTO: ANI**

mate landowners under the 50:50 scheme. He claimed to possess documentation substantiating his accusations and has submitted these records to the relevant investigating bodies.

Krishna's call for action was supported by Advocate N Ravi Kumar, who also demanded the arrest of Manjunath and an inquiry. Kumar condemned the builder for allegedly threatening RTI activists who have exposed his financial irregularities and for disseminating misleading advertisements in local newspapers regarding his acquisitions from MUDA. *—Salar News*

Hike in guest teachers' pay soon, says Bangarappa

BELAGAVI, 9 DEC

A proposal to increase in the monthly honorarium of guest teachers in government primary and high schools is awaiting the Finance Department's approval, Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Madhu Bangarappa said on Monday.

In his reply to a question by BJP MLC Dhananjaya Sarji in the legislative council, Bangarappa said the proposal is to increase the honorarium of guest teachers to Rs 15,000 and Rs 16,000.

These teachers have been appointed for the current academic year to manage the classes as several posts of teachers are vacant in the government primary and high schools in the state.

On 25 March 2024, the Finance Department wrote to the Primary and Secondary Education Department that the proposal sent on 13 June 2022 to increase the honorariums paid to the guest teachers cannot be implemented.

"However, the honorarium will be increased after obtaining the approval of the Finance Department," Bangarappa told the House.
—Salar News

DUO KILLED IN DRUNKEN BRAWL

BENGALURU, 9 DEC

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Two men from Nepal were found killed near an abandoned chemical factory in Yelahanka Industrial Area on Monday. Police suspect a drunken brawl with friends on Sunday night led to the killings.

The victims – Bikram, 21, a security guard, and Chhotu Toori, 33, a mini truck driver – were beaten to death with iron bars, tiles and stones, said Yelahanka New Town police.

The incident occurred on Sunday night outside the premises of a defunct factory unit in Yelahanka Industrial Area, 4th Stage, where Bikram had previously worked. The factory has been closed for over a year, sources said. Locals spotted the bodies on Monday morning and informed police, who sent the bodies for post-mortem . The police said the bodies carried multiple injury marks and the throats were slit.

Witnesses told the police that the duo was last seen around 10.15pm, drinking with a group of people near the factory. While the exact motive behind the killings is yet to be confirmed, investigators suspect that a petty argument under the influence of alcohol escalated into the killing.

Police detained three suspects for questioning. Another investigative team is reviewing CCTV footage from nearby areas to track if more people are involved in the crime. "We are working on leads and expect to make progress soon," a senior officer said.
—Salar News

CRIME BEAT

Man rapes friend

BENGALURU, 9 DEC

A 26-year-old woman working at a private hospital in Bengaluru was allegedly sedated and sexually assaulted by her male friend, who later blackmailed her with private videos, demanding sexual favours, police said on Monday.

The incident came to light on Friday when the woman filed a complaint with High Grounds police. Based on her statement, a case was registered against the accused under sections of rape, sexual assault, criminal intimidation, and outraging the modesty of a woman. The accused has also been charged under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, police said.

The woman said she met the accused in 2019 while working at a credit card company. He befriended her and later invited

- The accused befriended her and later invited her to a family function, where he offered her a drink laced with sedatives. He then raped her

her to a family function, where he offered her a drink laced with sedatives. She said that after she fell unconscious, he raped her and recorded the act.

She alleged that he used the video to blackmail her for sexual favours. Although she changed jobs to escape his harassment, he continued to threaten her, saying he would make the video public unless she complied.

The woman also alleged in her complaint that he humiliated her with caste slurs when she objected to his demands and instead asked him to marry her, a police officer said. *—PTI*

UP MAN KILLS SELF OVER MARITAL DISCORD; LEAVES 40-PAGE NOTE

BENGALURU, 09 DEC

PHOTO: PIXABAY

A man from Uttar Pradesh tragically took his own life by hanging in his residence at Manjunath Layout, Marathahalli, on Monday. Local police, upon arrival at the scene, discovered a placard reading "Justice is Due" affixed around his neck.

In the aftermath of the investigation, authorities recovered a 40-page suicide note indicating that the deceased, identified as Atul Subhash, aged approximately 40, had been battling depression linked to personal difficulties.

Reports suggest that Atul's mental health had deteriorated following a legal case filed against him by his wife in Uttar Pradesh.

Just hours before his death, he reached out for help through a message sent to an NGO's WhatsApp group, pleading, "Please help my family if possible," and provided his brother's contact details along with pertinent video clips and documents.

The police revealed that Atul had devised a "time-table" for his suicide, detailing actions to be taken prior to his passing. The Marathahalli police have initiated further investigations into the case.
—Salar News

Dhankar says time-out to Kharge & Nadda

RS was disrupted following allegations of Cong-Soros links; BJP says it will destabilise nation

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Rajya Sabha proceedings were disrupted several times on Monday as the treasury benches accused top Congress leaders of colluding with billionaire investor George Soros to destabilise the country, triggering protests from opposition members.

In the midst of the uproar, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar held a meeting with the Leader of the House, JP Nadda, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge. Dhankhar stated the need for unity in addressing internal and external challenges to India's sovereignty. "The purpose of that meeting was to ensure that the House runs smoothly. Both sides had a frank discussion and they signalled two things. One, that integrity, and sovereignty of the nation are sacred for us," Dhankhar said.He further stated, "Any challenge to the unity and integrity of the nation from within or outside requires all of us to offer a united challenge... We as a nation are committed to fighting the sinister forces, the forces that are inimical to India."

The Upper House failed to transact any business as it saw three adjournments, including two during the pre-lunch session. It was finally adjourned for the day amid noisy protests from both sides.

Soon after the House assembled for the day, members of treasury benches were on their feet, raising slogans and demanding answers from the Congress over reports of alleged links of some of its top leaders with Soros, who they accused of conspiring to destabilise the country and its economy.

On the other hand, opposition members claimed this was the ruling party's way of diverting attention from the Adani issue and continued to press for a discussion on it.

After a brief first adjournment during Zero Hour, Leader of the House J P Nadda said BJP members were agitated over an issue that involved Congress leaders and wanted a discussion. He repeated his charges soon after the House met after lunch.

"The link between Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific (FDL-AP) and George Soros is a matter of concern. Its co-president is a member of this House," he said. *—PTI*

Rajya Sabha Chairman Dhankhar stated the need for unity in addressing internal and external challenges to India's sovereignty **PHOTO: PTI**

- Opposition members meanwhile claimed that this was the ruling party BJP's way of diverting attention from the Gautam Adani issue and continued to press for a discussion on it

Soren, ministers take oath in J'khand Assembly

RANCHI, 9 DEC

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Monday took oath as a member of the Jharkhand Assembly on the first day of the four-day session of the House. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Radhakrishna Kishore, Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Deepak Birua and Labour Minister Sanjay Prasad Yadav were among the ministers in the Hemant Soren cabinet who also took oath as members of the assembly. He and the ministers were among 80 elected representatives who were administered the oath as MLAs by the assembly's pro-tem Speaker Stephen Marandi soon after the proceedings of the House began. The House was adjourned till 11 am on Tuesday after the oath-taking ceremony. The Speaker's election is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, an assembly official said. *—PTI*

Andhra DyCM's office receives threat calls

AMARAVATI, 9 DEC

An anonymous person made calls threatening to "kill" Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and his office received those calls, officials said. Targeting the Deputy Chief Minister, the person sent derogatory text messages, an official release said on Monday. "Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's peshi (office) received threatening calls. The unidentified person warned that he would kill (Kalyan)," said the press release. The staff manning the Janasena founder's office apprised the actor - politician and also senior police officials of the threatening calls. *—PTI*

Protest over Manipur missing man, 3 detained

IMPHAL, 9 DEC

The Manipur Police on Monday detained at least three women for attempting to stage a demonstration outside the Raj Bhawan here over the disappearance of a 56-year-old man from an army camp at Leimakhong in Kangpokpi district. Those who were detained include the wife of the man identified as Laishram Kamalbabu, an official said. "They attempted to stage a protest in front of the Raj Bhawan, but were prevented by women police personnel deployed at the high-security zone," he said. The women were taken to City police station and released later, the official said. Meanwhile, Thokchom Sujata, the convenor of Imagi Meira (a women's organisation), who accompanied the protesters, said, "We wanted to meet the governor... It has been 15 days now that Kamalbabu has been missing. Authorities keep saying search is underway, but so far there has been no concrete results." *—PTI*

RaGa conducts 'mock interview' of PM, Adani

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Standing outside the Makar Dwar of Parliament, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge along with MPs of other opposition parties raised slogans like "Modi, Adani ek hain" and "we want justice" on Monday.

After sloganeering, Gandhi conducted the mock 'interview' with Congress leaders wearing masks of Modi and Adani.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over protests by Opposition members in Parliament complex and termed him "comedy king" who is trying to stay relevant.

"Rahul is indulging in what he does best — Stand-up comedy! His malicious claims and rants have crumbled under the weight of comprehensive investigation every time. Playing the role of a pawn to perfection, he yet again attempts to mislead despite his misinformation campaigns failing to cut ice with the people of India," Pradhan wrote on X.

Meanwhile, Congress dismissed BJP's allegations of its leaders colluding with US investor George Soros. *— PTI*

BJP called the leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi a 'comedy king' **PHOTO: PTI**

Mahayuti alliance wins trust vote

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in Mumbai on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

MUMBAI, 9 DEC

Five days after assuming office, the Mahayuti alliance government in Maharashtra led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday comfortably won a confidence vote in the state assembly.

The trust motion, tabled by Shiv Sena MLA Uday Samant and others, was passed by a voice vote on the last day of the three-day special assembly session.

Speaker Rahul Narwekar, elected unopposed for a second straight term earlier in the day, announced that the trust motion has been approved by the newly-constituted House. The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP 'Mahayuti' coalition has a commanding majority of 230 seats in the 288-member assembly, where the majority mark is 145.

"The confidence motion has been passed with a majority," Narwekar said. *—PTI*

'EVM, VVPAT figures tally'

The district administration in Maharashtra's Nanded verified 75 VVPAT machines with votes on EVMs and found no difference in the tally, an official said on Monday. The counting and verification exercise was conducted on the Election Commission's instructions. The candidate-wise votes obtained from five centres were tallied with VVPATs, the official said. *—PTI*

AAP'S 2ND LIST

Sisodia shifts to Jangpura seat

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

AAP on Monday released its second list of 20 candidates for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, dropping 18 sitting MLAs and moving two others, including senior leader and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, to new seats.

Sisodia will now contest from Jangpura, while Avadh Ojha, an educator and recent AAP entrant, will contest from Sisodia's current Patparganj seat.

"Politics for me is a means to education, honesty, and public welfare. I am ready to replicate the work done in Patparganj in Jangpura," Sisodia said.

Commenting on Sisodia moving to a different seat, Delhi minister Gopal Rai said, "Manish Sisodia is capable of winning anywhere in Delhi."

AAP campaigns with Pushpa-inspired posters **PHOTO: PTI**

Another MLA who has been named a candidate in the second list is Deputy Speaker Rakhi Birla but she has been shifted from Mangolpuri to Madipur, with Rakesh Jatav Dharamrakshak contesting from her current seat.

Madipur MLA Girish Soni has been dropped.

Narela MLA Sharad Kumar Chauhan has been replaced by Dinesh Bharadwaj.

Timarpur MLA and the party's chief whip in the State Assembly Dilip K Pandey has been replaced by Surendra Pal Singh Bittu. *—PTI*

EX-NCW CHIEF IS BJP CANDIDATE FOR RS BYPOLLS

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The BJP on Monday announced three candidates, including former National Commission for Women chief Rekha Sharma from Haryana, for the 20 December Rajya Sabha bypolls.

The party also fielded Ryaga Krishnaiah from Andhra Pradesh and Sujeet Kumar from Odisha, the two leaders who switched over from the YSRCP and the BJD, respectively. Krishnaiah had resigned his Rajya Sabha seat and left the YSRCP.

Three vacancies arose in Andhra Pradesh when YSRCP members Venkataramana Rao Mopidevi, Beedha Masthan Rao Yadav and Ryaga Krishnaiah quit their membership in August. Yadav and Krishnaiah's terms were to end on 21 June, 2028. *—PTI*

Will we have lollipops: Didi asks Bangladesh

KOLKATA, 9 DEC

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday reacted strongly to reported statements by some Bangladeshi leaders that Bangladesh could occupy Bengal within days, calling them "absurd" and said, "when you will come to occupy our land, don't think we will have lollipops".

"No one has the guts to take our lands, don't even think about it," she said.

While addressing the West Bengal Assembly, Banerjee also slammed the interim government in Bangladesh for the persecution of minorities, calling it "unacceptable".

Banerjee's comments came amidst provocative statements reportedly made by some politicians, including those from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), that Bangladesh has claims over Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha.

The chief minister, without naming anyone, also condemned the circulation of certain fake videos and blamed a certain political party for attempting to stoke tensions in the state.

"Those thinking of politicising this (issue of atrocities) must remember that it will hurt our state too, and your friends, sisters, and brothers in Bangladesh. A certain political party is responsible for the circulation of fake videos to stoke fire. I appeal to everyone to stay away from such misinformation. We are not in favour of any one group, we care for everyone here," she said. *—PTI*

- While addressing the West Bengal Assembly, Mamata Banerjee also slammed the interim government in Bangladesh for the persecution of minorities, calling it "unacceptable".

TENSION IN WEST ASIA

India calls for ensuring territorial integrity of Syria

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

A day after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government in Syria, India on Monday joined leading nations to call for stability and preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Arab nation.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it is monitoring the unfolding developments in Syria and advocated a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process going forward in that country.

The Syrian government collapsed on Sunday as the rebels seized control of the capital Damascus after capturing several other prominent cities and towns.

Assad fled the country after the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took control of Damascus, marking the end of his family's 50-year rule.

"We are monitoring the situation in Syria in the light of ongoing developments. We underline the need for all parties to work towards preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria," the MEA said in a statement.

"We advocate a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process respecting the interests and aspirations of all sections of Syrian society," it said.

The MEA said the Indian embassy in Damascus is in contact with the Indian community in Syria for their "safety and security".

Hours after the rebels captured power, official sources in Delhi on Sunday said all Indian nationals in Syria are safe.

Many leading countries have also welcomed fall of the nearly 14-year-long Assad regime that witnessed civil strife across Syria. *—PTI*

Many leading countries have also welcomed fall of the nearly 53-year-long Assad regime that witnessed civil strife across Syria **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: X

J'khand man held for threatening Union minister

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Delhi Police arrested a 46-year-old man from Jharkhand for allegedly sending a ransom threat message to Union Minister of State for Defence, Sanjay Seth, officials said on Monday. The accused, a resident of Ranchi, was arrested on Sunday and is currently under further interrogation, the officials added. Seth, who is the Member of Parliament for Ranchi, had received a threat message demanding a ransom of Rs 50 lakh from an unknown number on his mobile phone last Friday, officials said. Seth informed the Delhi Police and the Jharkhand DGP. Senior officers fincluding a Deputy Commissioner of Police, visited Seth to ensure swift action was taken in the case. *—PTI*

IUML confirms Kerala's Munambam as Waqf's

MALAPPURAM/NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Straining the relationship between the Congress and its key ally, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), senior League leader and MP ET Mohammed Basheer said on Monday that the contentious property in Munambam in Ernakulam district is Waqf land.

"At no point has IUML state president Panakkad Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal stated that the land in Munambam is not Waqf property," he told reporters in New Delhi on Monday. Responding to IUML leader KM Shaji's statement that no one could deny the Waqf Board's ownership of the land, Basheer said that the former made this statement based on the facts. "IUML leader Kunhalikutty had stated that Panakkad Thangal had clearly said the party's stance and do not make controversies. However, at no point did Thangal claim the land in Munambam is not Waqf property," he added. *—PTI*

Mohammed Basheer **PHOTO: X**

VCK suspends Aadhav over DMK monarchy comment

CHENNAI, 9 DEC

Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Chief Thol Thirumavalavan on Monday announced the suspension of party deputy general secretary, Aadhav Arjuna for six months, days after the latter's 'monarchy' comment aimed at the ruling DMK.

The suspended deputy general secretary had also recently put forth the demand of share in power, an ideological standpoint of the VCK, a key constituent of the DMK-led bloc in Tamil Nadu. Arjuna said that time will decide the possible results of the party's action against him. *—PTI*

Stop Madurai tungsten mining: TN

CHENNAI, 9 DEC

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Monday passed a resolution urging the Centre to immediately cancel tungsten mining rights granted to Hindustan Zinc Limited in the state, following an intense debate in the Assembly House.

Chief Minister MK Stalin, who intervened during the debate, asserted he would not allow mining at any cost, as it would affect the livelihood besides adversely impact the environment.

"If it (project) comes, then I will not hold this post (of Chief Minister)," Stalin said when the Leader of Opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami charged the ruling dispensation with "being silent" for 10 months and deciding to act only after the people in the affected areas of Melur in Madurai district protested.

Resolution piloted by Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan was passed with the BJP choosing not to oppose it. Inspite of pointing out that the area where rights have been granted was declared a Bio-Diversity Heritage Site by the state government in 2022, the Centre gave the rights for mining activities. *—PTI*

Crude bomb blast in West Bengal kills 3

KOLKATA, 9 DEC

At least three persons were killed and a few others injured in an explosion when they were allegedly manufacturing illegal crude bombs in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, police said on Monday. The incident happened late Sunday night at Khoyertala village under Sagarpara gram panchayat, they said. The three deceased were identified as Sakirul Sarkar, 32, Mamon Mollah , 30 and Mustakin Shiekh, 28, the police officer said, adding that those injured fled the place. Initial probe revealed that the deceased trio were recently found to be involved in phensedyl smuggling. Locals tried to take Mamon Mollah and Sakirul Sarkar to Murshidabad Medical College and Hospital but both succumbed on their way, he added. A police team was deployed in the area while the bomb squad was investigating at the explosion site, the officer said.- *—PTI*

2 students fall to death from fourth floor in Delhi

JAMMU, 9 DEC

Five people allegedly involved in drug trafficking were detained during a search operation along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Monday, officials said. The search operation was launched in the forward areas following inputs about drug trafficking in the area, they said. Police personnel cordoned off Khari, Ajote, Degwar, Purani, Poonch and Jernally Mohalla in the district, the officials said. During the operation, five people allegedly involved in drug trafficking were detained for questioning, they said. *—PTI*

Pakistan intruder shot dead in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 9 DEC

A suspected Pakistani intruder was shot dead along the International Border in Punjab's Amritsar district, a BSF spokesperson said on Monday. The incident happened in the border area near Mahawa village Sunday night when BSF troops noticed some suspicious movement. "During the night hours, alert BSF troops on duty observed suspicious movement of a Pakistani intruder, who surreptitiously crossed the international boundary and started approaching the border security fence taking advantage of the darkness," said the spokesperson. The BSF troops challenged the intruder but he did not stop and started running towards the security fence, said the spokesperson. "Noticing his aggressive move, the troops on duty fired upon the advancing intruder, neutralising him on the spot," said the spokesperson. A shoulder bag with some clothes and personal belongings were recovered, the spokesperson added. *—PTI*

Delhi sees most moderate air quality days in Dec

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Delhi's air quality returned to 'moderate' category on Monday, marking the highest number of moderate air quality days -- four -- ever recorded in December. The capital also recorded its lowest daytime temperature this winter season so far, with maximum temperature settling at 21.6 degrees Celsius, 3.2 notches below normal, according to the weather department. The second-lowest maximum temperature was recorded on November 18 at 23.5 degrees Celsius, as per the data. Signaling a welcome improvement after the recent fluctuations in pollution levels, the Air Quality Index (AQI), which was in the 'very poor' category on Sunday at 302, improved to 186 by 4 pm on Monday, placing it in the 'moderate' category. Data showed that the highest record was set in 2022, 2019, and 2015 when December had three days of moderate air quality. No moderate air quality days were reported in December 2023. *—PTI*

40 Delhi schools get bomb threats for ₹25L ransom

Police said nothing suspicious was found in the school premises

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Around 40 schools in Delhi received a bomb threat mail on Monday morning with the sender demanding USD 30,000 (Rs 25,000), prompting a multi-agency search of the premises but "nothing suspicious was found", a police official said.

The threat was sent in a single e-mail marked to the some of the city's prominent schools including DPS RK Puram; GD Goenka, Paschim Vihar; The British School, Chanakyapuri; The Mother's International, Aurobindo Marg; Modern School, Mandi House; DPS Vasant Kunj; Delhi Police Public School, Safdarjung; DPS East of Kailash and Salwan Public Schools.

Most schools that received the threat suspended classes and sent students back home.

Officials said the premises of the schools that received the threat were thoroughly checked and nothing suspicious was found. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary said the e-mail was received by four school located within his district as well. "Soon after getting the information, we conducted a thorough check of the school premises. Nothing suspicious was found. I request parents to not panic." The email read, "I planted multiple bombs inside the building. The bombs are small and hidden very well. It will not cause very much damage to the building, but many people will be injured when the bombs detonate." In a message to parents, Mother Mary's School, Mayur Vihar, said, "An email was received this morning regarding a bomb threat in school. As such, the students are being dispersed immediately as a precautionary measure. You are requested to kindly collect your wards from your respective bus stops.

In May, more than 200 schools, hospitals received a similar kind of bomb threat but the case is yet to solved as the mail was sent using Virtual Private Network (VPN). *—PTI*

Students return home after around 40 schools in Delhi received a bomb threat mail, in New Delhi, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

AGRA AIRPORT GETS BOMB THREAT MESSAGE

AGRA, 9 DEC

The Agra airport received an email bomb threat on Monday, prompting a thorough search by security agencies but "nothing suspicious was found", police said.

The Kheria Airport serves as a civil aviation facility as well as a base station for the Air Force.

"An email received by the CISF (which provides security at the airport) at the Agra Airport at 11.56 am on Monday that a bomb has been placed in the bathroom of the airport premises. A bomb disposal team was sent to the airport premises," Assistant Commissioner of Police (Lohamandi) Mayank Tiwari told PTI.

Later, Agra Airport Director Yogendra Singh Tomar said, "After nearly two hours of intense search on the airport premises, nothing suspicious was found." *—PTI*

SC asked the state to report on buildings that were completely or partially burnt, looted, or encroached upon **PHOTO: PTI**

SC seeks report on property damages in Manipur violence

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The Supreme Court has ordered the Manipur government to submit a comprehensive sealed cover report detailing properties affected by ongoing ethnic violence in the state. Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar highlighted the urgent need to address the grievances of displaced persons and restore their properties.

The state must report on buildings that were completely or partially burnt, looted, or encroached upon, including the names and addresses of property owners and current occupants, as well as any legal actions taken against trespassers. The court emphasised that the report should outline steps for criminal proceedings against trespassers and the recovery of 'mesne profits'—compensation for unlawful occupation. The bench also pressed the Manipur government to address funding for temporary and permanent housing for those displaced, as flagged by a panel of three judges headed by Justice Gita Mittal. Senior advocate Vibha Makhija informed the court that the committee had made significant progress in rehabilitation efforts, helping individuals with skill development and facilitating their return to properties.

The Solicitor General, Tushar Mehta, assured the bench of the government's prioritisation of law and order, but expressed reluctance to disclose data publicly due to concerns about media misinterpretation. The Chief Justice reminded him that the court was aware of public sentiment towards the government.

Since ethnic violence erupted on 3 May 2023, over 200 lives have been lost, hundreds injured, and thousands displaced. *—PTI*

Modi urges youth to join politics, rejects 'dynasty rule'

AHMEDABAD, 9 DEC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said efforts are being made to bring youth into politics because it cannot be left to those who only believe in dynasty politics and consider it as family property.

Virtually addressing an event organized by Ramkrishna Math at Lekhamba village near Sanand town here, the PM said the Young Leaders' Dialogue will be organised in Delhi on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda to "make a new beginning' towards this aim. Modi said spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda, the founder of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, was of the opinion that participation of youths will be crucial for the development of the nation.

"Along with technology and other sectors, it is needed that our youngsters lead our country in politics too because we cannot leave it to those who believe only in dynasty politics. We cannot handover politics to those who consider politics as their family's property" he said."That is why we are going to make a new beginning. On the occasion of Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, we are organising Young Leaders' Dialogue in Delhi," Modi said. *—PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being received on his arrival at Hindon Air base in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Kerala Minister slams actress for ₹5L dance classes

PRAYAGRAJ, 9 DEC

SKerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Wednesday criticised a popular Malayalam film actress for demanding Rs five lakhs as remuneration for choreographing the welcome dance and song of the upcoming state school youth festival.

Without naming the actress, the minister said she demanded a hefty amount for teaching children a 10-minute-long presentation. The minister was heard speaking during a programme, the voice clip of which was aired by TV channels. Terming it as "greed" and "arrogance", he said.

Sivankutty further said the department decided to exclude the particular actress and opt for dedicated artists for the same. *—PTI*

BPO worker rape-murder case: SC upholds Bombay HC order on lifer

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld an order of the Bombay High Court which commuted the death penalty of two convicts in the 2007 Pune BPO employee gang-rape and murder case to "life term for a period of 35 years" on the grounds of an inordinate delay in executing them. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Masih dismissed the appeal challenging the Bombay High Court judgement. The convicts – Purushottam Borate and Pradeep Kokade – were to be executed on 24 June, 2019, but the High Court said that the execution should not take place until further orders. *—PTI*

India will run according to Hindu majority: HC judge

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court, in a lecture during the Constitutional Necessity of a Uniform Civil Code on 8 December said that, "I have no hesitation in stating that this is Hindustan, and this country will function according to the wishes of the majority living here. This is the law. It is not about speaking as a High Court Judge; rather, the law operates in accordance with the bahusankyak (majority),"

The event, was organised by the legal cell of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP).

"The main objective of the Uniform Civil Code is to promote social harmony, gender equality and secularism by eliminating unequal legal systems based on different religions and communities," he said, according to a release issued by the VHP.

"A Uniform Civil Code refers to a common law that applies to all religious communities in personal matters such as marriage, inheritance, divorce, adoption etc," he said.

"The aim of the Uniform Civil Code is to replace various personal laws that currently govern personal matters within different religious communities. Its goal is to ensure uniformity of laws not only between communities but also within a community," the judge added.

A day later, videos of the judge speaking on provocative issues, including the law working according to the majority, were circulated widely, triggering a strong reaction from various opposition parties which questioned his reported statements and labelled them hate speech.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi in a post on X quoted from 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life,' a code of ethics adopted by the Supreme Court, to say that a judge must "not enter into public debate or express his views in public on political matters or on matters that are pending or are likely to arise for judicial determination."

He quoted further, "Every judge must at all times be conscious that he is under the public gaze and there should be no act or omission by him which is unbecoming of the high office he occupies and the public esteem in which that office is held." Samajwadi Party leader Ramgopal Yadav dragged the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological fountainhead of the BJP, into the row sparked by the high court judge's remarks.

"RSS has always been like that, they can do anything to get to the Supreme Court," he said, but did not elaborate further. Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Brinda Karat on Monday wrote to Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna stating that the speech made by the Allahabad High Court judge is a violation of his oath, and said there should be "no place for such persons in a court of justice."

"Judges take their oath on the Constitution of India. This speech is a violation of that oath. This speech is a hate speech," she said.

Karat sought action from the apex court on the issue.

at the event, the chief guest, VHP national co-convener Abhishek Atrey, talked about the Waqf Amendment Act and the need for Indians to stay united. "Bangladesh looks like another Kashmir. We all have to stay united to protect our identity," he said.

Allahabad HC senior advocate V P Srivastava shared his experience on the topic 'Conversion - Causes and Prevention.' On 13 March this year, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Uniform Civil Code Bill, passed by the Uttarakhand Assembly on February 7, making it the first state in the country after Independence to adopt the UCC. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

- He says the aim of the Uniform Civil Code is to replace various personal laws that currently govern personal matters within different religious communities. Its goal is to ensure uniformity of laws

2 SpiceJet flights make emergency landing

Spicejet said that alternative arrangements were made for the passengers following the emergency landing **PHOTO: X**

CHENNAI/PATNA, 9 DEC

A Kochi-bound SpiceJet with over 100 passengers and crew members on Monday made an "emergency landing" here, after a "technical glitch" was detected mid-air, officials at the airport said.

The airline said the aircraft landed safely and the passengers were "deplaned normally." According to airport officials, the flight left for Kochi from here with 117 passengers. The pilot later detected the "technical glitch," following which the flight turned back to Chennai and made the "emergency landing," they said. Required safety measures were in place and the aircraft made a safe landing, they added.

In another incident, a Delhi-Shillong SpiceJet flight was diverted to Patna due to a technical glitch and it landed safely at the Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport here on Monday morning, officials said. Alternative arrangements were made for the passengers.

Patna airport director Anchal Prakash said, "Alternative arrangements are being made for the passengers. It was a normal landing and passengers and crew members on board were safe, he added. *—PTI*

20 cows die in Punjab, Hindu bodies protest

PHAGWARA, 9 DEC

20 cows died and 28 fell sick at a shelter here, triggering protests by various Hindu bodies who alleged that their feed was poisoned and called for a bandh on Monday. Officials, however, said no malafide motive is suspected behind the incident.

Phagwara Superintendent of Police Rupinder Kaur Bhatti said 20 cows died and 28 fell sick at Shri Krishan Gaushala, Mehligate here on Sunday night. The exact cause of death will be known once the post-mortem report comes, Bhatti said. "CCTV footage from the gaushala is being scanned to find out if there was any mischief behind the incident," she added. The sick cows are being treated by a team of veterinarians.

On a complaint by cow shelter manager Satnam Singh, a case has been registered in the matter under sections 299 (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class) and 325 (punishment for committing mischief by killing, poisoning, or rendering useless any animal) of the BNS. *—PTI*

'INSULTING KSHATRIYAS'

'Pushpa 2' under fire over 'Shekhawat' word

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Rajput leader Raj Shekhawat has issued threats against the producers of the film 'Pushpa 2', claiming the movie contains elements that insult the Kshatriya community. In a post on X, Shekhawat stated, "Pushpa 2 features a negative portrayal of 'Shekhawat', representing yet another affront to Kshatriyas. The film's producers should prepare for repercussions."

Shekhawat accused the film of persistently using the 'Shekhawat' term in a derogatory manner, asserting that this has demeaned the community. In a video statement, he expressed his discontent: "The movie gravely insults Kshatriyas, depicting the 'Shekhawat' community in a poor light. This film industry has repeatedly disrespected Kshatriyas under the guise of free speech, and they have done so again."

He demanded the removal of the term from the film, warning that if action is not taken, the Karni Sena would resort to violence against the filmmakers. *—PTI*

In the movie actor Fahad Fazil plays the character of Shekhavat, which the Hindu group said the term was used in a derogatory manner; Raj Shekhawat (inset) **PHOTO: X**

SHIMLA'S 1ST SNOWFALL IN DECADES

Snow covered houses and buildings after fresh snowfall in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, on Monday. Shimla saw the season's first snowfall recently, in a first in many decades while continuing intermittent snowfall in the higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh's tribal Lahaul and Spiti district intensified cold conditions in the adjoining valleys ***PHOTO: PTI***

Rebuilding Syria key task for new government

Who could have predicted that after nearly 14 years of civil war and five years of stalemate, the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria would collapse in just a week? With Assad's departure, the pressing question now is what lies ahead for Syria's immediate future.

When Opposition fighters led by the group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized the major city of Aleppo in late November with minimal resistance, commentators widely believed it marked the beginning of the Assad regime's downfall. Many anticipated a bitter fight to the end.

Assad was caught off guard, and his forces were clearly unprepared. He withdrew his remaining troops from Aleppo to regroup and gain time for reinforcements to arrive from Russia and Iran, and hope the opposition fighters would stop there.

Russia provided limited air support to Assad. But Iran, having depleted its forces in Hezbollah's defence against Israel in Lebanon, was unable to offer significant assistance and withdrew its remaining personnel from Syria. Meanwhile, Assad's frantic calls for support from Iraq did not go anywhere.

And on the last day, Assad fled the country, and his prime minister officially handed over power to HTS and its leadership. The Assad family, including Bashar al-Assad and his father, Hafez al-Assad, will likely be remembered by the majority of Syrians as brutal dictators. In 1966, Hafez al-Assad led a coup alongside other officers from the Alawite minority. This ultimately resulted in a civilian regime, with Hafez al-Assad becoming president in 1970.

Hafez al-Assad is most infamously remembered for his brutal suppression of the opposition in 1982. The uprising, led by the Islamic Front, saw the opposition capture the city of Hama. In response, the Syrian army razed the city, leaving an estimated 10,000 to 40,000 civilians dead or disappeared and decisively crushing the rebellion.

Syrian opposition fighters celebrate after the Syrian government collapsed in Damascus, Syria ***PHOTO: PTI***

Assad soon found himself navigating a turbulent regional landscape following the 11 September 2001 terror attacks and the US invasion of Iraq. In 2004, after the United States imposed sanctions on Syria, Assad sought closer ties with Turkey. He and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan became friends, removing visa requirements between their countries and making plans to establish economic zones to boost trade.

Erdogan and Assad then had a falling out during a series of events in 2011, a year that marked a turning point for Syria. The Arab Spring revolts swept into the country, presenting Assad with a critical choice: to pursue a democratic path or crush the opposition as his father had done in 1982.

He chose the latter, missing a historic opportunity to peacefully transform Syria.

The consequences were catastrophic. A devastating civil war broke out, resulting in more than 300,000 deaths (some estimates are higher), 5.4 million refugees, and 6.9 million people internally displaced. This will be Assad's legacy. HTS and its leadership will face immediate challenges and four key priorities:

1)The new leadership will now try to ensure there are no armed groups capable of contesting their rule, particularly remnants of the old Assad regime and smaller factions that were not part of the opposition forces.

Critically, they will also need to discuss how power will be shared among the coalition of opposition groups. Al-Jolani is likely to become the founding president of the new Syria, but how the rest of the power will be distributed remains uncertain.

2) Syria is a very complex and diverse place. As such, the new government can only be sustained if it gains international recognition.

3) The question on everyone's mind is what kind of political order the Opposition forces will now establish. HTS and many of the groups in its coalition are Sunni Muslims, with HTS having origins linked to al-Qaeda. However, HTS broke away from the terror organisation in 2016 and shifted its focus exclusively to Syria as an opposition movement. Nevertheless, we should not expect a democratic secular rule. The new government is also unlikely to resemble the ultra-conservative theocratic rule of the Taliban.

4) Rebuilding the country and maintaining unity. This is needed to prevent another civil war from erupting — this time among the winners.

HTS said the new Syria will focus on construction, progress and reconciliation. They aims to create positive conditions for displaced Syrians to return to their country, establish constructive relations with neighbouring countries and prioritise rebuilding the economy. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Nations address earth's land drying issue

Much of Earth's lands are drying out and damaging the ability of plant and animal life to survive, according to a United Nations report released on 9 December at talks where countries are working to address the problem.

The report was released at the UN summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on combating desertification — once-fertile lands turning into deserts because of hotter temperatures from human-caused climate change, lack of water and deforestation. It found that more than three-quarters of the world's land experienced drier conditions from 1970 to 2020 than the previous thirty-year period.

"The drier climates now affecting vast lands across the globe will not return to how they were," said Ibrahim Thiaw, chief of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which is facilitating the Riyadh talks. "This change is redefining life on Earth."

At the talks, which started last week and are set to end on Friday, nations are discussing how better they can help the world deal with droughts — a more urgent lack of water over shorter periods — and the more permanent problem of degrading land. If global warming trends continue, nearly five billion people — including in most of Europe, parts of the western US, Brazil, eastern Asia and central Africa — will be affected by the drying by the end of the century, up from a quarter of the world's population today, the report warned.

UNCCD's Chief scientist Barron Orr warned drier land could lead to "potentially catastrophic impacts affecting access to water that could push people and nature even closer to disastrous tipping points," where humans are no longer able to reverse damaging effects of climate change.

Sergio Vicente-Serrano, one of the lead authors of the report, said that as the atmosphere heats up because the burning of coal, oil and gas spews planet-warming emissions, it leads to more evaporation on the ground. That makes water less available for humans, plants and animals, making it harder to survive.

Farming is particularly at risk, with drier land being less productive and hurting both yields and the availability of food for livestock, the report said. That can lead to food insecurity for communities worldwide.

Aridity also leads to more migration, because erratic rainfall, degrading land and frequent water shortages make it harder for regions or nations to develop economically, the report said. It said the trend is especially noticeable in some of the world's driest areas such as southern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and southern Asia.

Any money pledged would go toward better forecasting and monitoring systems as well as creating reservoirs and other structures that can provide access to water even during prolonged dry spells. Thiaw, the UNCCD Chief, said that hosts Saudi Arabia pledging USD 2.15 billion from various countries and international banks for drought resilience has set the right tone for the meetings. And the Arab Coordination Group — 10 development banks based in the Middle East — committed USD 10 billion by 2030 to address degrading land, desertification and drought.

The funds are expected to support 80 of the most vulnerable countries prepare for worsening drought conditions. But the UN estimates that between 2007 and 2017, droughts cost USD 125 billion worldwide.

While drought can be very damaging, Thiaw wrote in Monday's report, recovery is possible. But he called the drying of land "an unrelenting menace that requires lasting adaptation measures."

Longer lasting solutions — such as the curbing of climate change — are not much of a talking point at the Riyadh summit. Hosts Saudi Arabia have long been criticized by some other nations and climate analysts for stalling progress on curbing emissions from fossil fuels at other negotiations.

The U.N.'s report recommends that countries improve their land use practices and are more efficient at using water. That includes rolling out measures like growing crops that need less water and irrigation methods that are more efficient — like drip irrigation, which feeds water to plants slowly to minimize evaporation — on a much larger scale.

It also suggests better monitoring so that communities can plan ahead, and large-scale reforestation projects to protect the earth and its moisture.

Andrea Toreti, one of the report's lead authors, said addressing the issue — just like tackling climate change or biodiversity loss — will need countries to work better together.

It "requires coordinated international action and an unwavering commitment," he said. *—PTI*

Acoording to the report, farming is particularly at risk, with drier land being less productive and hurting both yields and the availability of food for livestock ***PHOTO: PTI***

India's MGNREGS key to nature-based solutions: COP16 report

Some 93-95 per cent of the world's Nature-based Solutions (NbS) employments are concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region, with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) being a major contributor, according to a report launched on 7 December at the 16th Conference of Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) being held at Riyadh.

More than half of the 59 million people employed globally through the employment opportunities created through NbS are women, the report titled Decent Work in Nature-based solutions 2024 noted.

The UN defines NbS, as "actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems".

The report is the second in a series, the first part of which was launched in 2022. The 2024 report is a joint contribution of the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The analysis emphasises that NbS can not only address climate change issues but also generate employment. It talks about the number and quality of jobs that can be created by NbS adoption; In turn, better quality jobs can help promote NbS. The findings would feed global policies and investments to promote NbS and achieve sustainable inclusive economies and societies.

NbS offers an essential tool in the implementation of climate and biodiversity policy frameworks when planned and implemented using a robust environmental, social, and economic framework following the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, said Stewart Maginnis, deputy director-general of IUCN.

This makes NbS a scalable and effective means to address the interlinked climate and biodiversity crises while delivering important benefits for human well-being and livelihoods, including good jobs.

The first report, launched in 2022 at the 15th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity in Canada's Montreal, aimed to fill knowledge and advocacy gaps required to transition to a green economy, its effect on the global population and the role played by NbS to generate employment opportunities especially to the poor and vulnerable groups.

According COP16 report many countries have now started integrating Nature-based solutions in their policies and action plans and more investments focusing on green and hybrid solutions ***PHOTO: PTI***

It talked on three key concepts of achieving decent jobs (with four pillars of employment generation, rights at work, social protection and dialogue), just transition (by seizing the opportunities and mitigating the risks of green transition for decent work) and NbS.

The 2024 report evaluates the major developments on Nbs since the report launch. NbS was included directly or indirectly in the three Rio conventions in 1992, which acknowledged NbS as a means to achieve their specific targets and adoption of its work program in the 28th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change last year in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Also, many countries have now started integrating NbS in their national policies and action plans and more investments focusing on green and hybrid solutions since the last two decades. However, the report finds investment to be still inadequate.

The second report in the series is an attempt to deep dive and deepen the understanding the relation between NbS, employment and its role to achieve SustainableDevelopment Goal targets and thus promote informed policy integrations and financing to help the vulnerable. The modelled scenarios estimate that only 1.8 per cent of global employment is contributed by NbS of which 95 per cent is contributed by MGNREGS in India. However, in terms of full-time employment (FTE), it accounts 85-87 per cent of the global contribution as public employment programmes (PEPs) provide part time employment on project basis. Major contribution is from low- and middle-income countries despite lowest share of expenditure from this region. Regions like the European Union and North America have fewer workers, but a comparatively higher percentage of FTEs. Addressing climate change and various other challenges would require Nature based Infrastructure (NbI) to deliver the services from NbS. The report estimates that even a small amount — an estimated US2.9 trillion in NbI — can pump up significant investment for infrastructural growth. The high income countries could upgrade existing infrastructure while LMICs can leverage on the opportunity and directly implement the upgraded NbIs. Investing into community-based NbIs would foster ownerships, skill development and employment opportunities. Investing in skill development shall also help decrease gender disparities by offering increasing opportunities to women and the marginalised, integrate participative decision-making approaches and ensure fair working conditions. At present, most of the work through NbS is temporary and informal. The workers are also not properly skilled and resilient to climate change shocks. Increasing investments in NbS would mean more jobs but the regions would still suffer as effective delivery would mean sector-specific upskilling for their work force. The report recommends strengthening of policy frameworks, investments in upskilling the workforce for middle and higher skilled roles, work on promoting rights and inclusivity in the NbS workforce and strengthening data collection and monitoring for informed decisions. *—PTI*

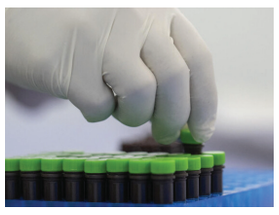


PHOTO: X

Morocco produces Africa's first mpox tests

TAMESNA, 9 DEC

After African countries struggled to get testing kits during the Covid-19 pandemic, officials vowed to make the continent less dependent on imported medical supplies. Now, in a first for Africa, a Moroccan company is filling orders for mpox tests as an outbreak continues. Moroccan startup Moldiag began developing mpox tests after the World Health Organisation declared the virus a global emergency in August. Africa's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has reported more than 59,000 mpox cases and 1,164 deaths in 20 countries this year. The WHO has also announced a plan to provide mpox tests, vaccines and treatments to the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries, after facing criticism for moving too slowly on vaccines.

Indian-American family to sue woman over racism

NEW YORK, 9 DEC

An Indian-American family subjected to racial harassment last month plans to press charges against the woman who hurled abuses at them, emphasising the need for accountability and speaking out against hate. The incident took place in November when renowned photographer Pervez Taufiq, 50, was travelling with his wife and three kids from Mexico to Los Angeles in a bus. A fellow female passenger went on a racist diatribe against the family while it was onboard the United Airlines shuttle bus. Taufiq posted a video online of his family's ordeal that shows the woman racially abusing them, using expletives and making derogatory gestures at them. "Your family is from India, you have no respect. You have no rules," the woman says. *—PTI*

Tonga's PM quits ahead of no-trust motion

WELLINGTON, 9 DEC

Tonga's Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni abruptly resigned in Parliament on Monday ahead of a planned no-confidence vote in his leadership, capping a period of fraught relations between his government and Tonga's king. Sovaleni, who took office in 2021, did not specify a reason for his departure but his resignation halted the no-confidence motion expected on Monday. It was not immediately clear who would succeed him. His resignation comes less than a year before a national election in Tonga, a South Pacific Island nation of 1,05,000 people, and it highlighted the occasional tensions between Tonga's monarchy and elected lawmakers in a still-young democracy. *—PTI*

Syrian rebels free prisoners from Assad's notorious jails

The dungeon prisons are infamous for systematic torture

DAMASCUS, 9 DEC

Bashar Barhoum woke in his dungeon prison cell in Damascus at dawn Sunday, thinking it would be the last day of his life.

The 63-year-old writer was supposed to have been executed after being imprisoned for seven months.

But he soon realised the men at the door weren't from former Syrian President Bashar Assad's notorious security forces, ready to take him to his death. Instead, they were rebels coming to set him free.

As the insurgents swept across Syria in just 10 days to bring an end to the Assad family's 50-year rule, they broke into prisons and security facilities to free political prisoners and many of the tens of thousands of people who disappeared since the conflict began back in 2011.

Barhoum was one of those freed who were celebrating in Damascus.

"I haven't seen the sun until today," Barhoum told AP.

Videos shared widely across social media showed dozens of prisoners running in celebration after the insurgents released them, some barefoot and others wearing little clothing. One of them screams in celebration after he finds out that the government has fallen. Syria's prisons have been infamous for their harsh conditions. Torture is systematic, say human rights groups, whistleblowers, and former detainees. Secret executions have been reported at more than two dozen facilities run by Syrian intelligence. In 2013, a Syrian military defector, known as "Caesar," smuggled out over 53,000 photographs that human rights groups say showed clear evidence of rampant torture, but also disease and starvation in Syria's prison. *—PTI*

Video footages show people digging through the ground to free trapped prisoners **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

> **The fall of the Assad regime that brutalised, tortured and killed thousands of innocent Syrians over the past half a century is a historic opportunity for the people of the country. We're not sure where he is, but there's word that he's in Moscow. At long last, the Assad regime has fallen**
>
> —Joe Biden, US President

Israel strikes weapons sites in Syria

Jerusalem, 9 Dec

Israel has struck suspected chemical weapons sites and long-range rockets in Syria in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of hostile actors, the Foreign Minister said Monday. Israelis have welcomed the fall of Assad, who was a key ally of Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, while expressing concern over what comes next. Israel says its forces temporarily seized a buffer zone inside Syria dating back to a 1974 agreement after Syrian troops withdrew in the chaos. An Associated Press journalist in Damascus reported airstrikes in the area of the Mezzeh military airport, southwest of the capital, on Sunday. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Israel PM on trial over corruption cases

JERUSALEM, 9 DEC

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to take to the witness stand on Tuesday for the first time in his trial on corruption allegations, a pivotal point in the drawn-out proceedings that comes as the leader wages war in Gaza and faces an international arrest warrant for war crimes charges.

At home, Netanyahu is on trial for accusations of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate affairs. Netanyahu denies wrongdoing, but his appearance on the witness stand will be a low point in his decades-long political career.

The trial will take up a chunk of Netanyahu's time at a crucial point for Israel.

While he makes his case for weeks from the stand, he will still be tasked with managing the war in Gaza, maintaining a fragile ceasefire with Hezbollah.

It will be the first time an Israeli prime minister has taken the stand as a criminal defendant.

The judges ordered the trial to resume on Tuesday, moving the proceedings to an underground chamber in a Tel Aviv court as a security precaution.

The trial, which began in 2020, involves three separate cases in which prosecutors say Netanyahu exchanged regulatory favors with media titans for favourable press coverage and advanced the personal interests of a billionaire Hollywood producer in exchange for lavish gifts. *—PTI*

ISRAELI STRIKES KILL 6 IN GAZA

PHOTO: PTI

JERUSALEM, 9 DEC

Palestinian medical officials said Monday that Israeli strikes in the central Gaza Strip overnight killed at least six people, including one woman.

The UN Security Council plans to hold emergency closed consultations on Syria later Monday at Russia's request. *—PTI*

South Korea imposes travel ban on President

SEOUL, 9 DEC

South Korea's Justice Ministry on Monday imposed an overseas travel ban on President Yoon Suk Yeol as authorities investigate allegations of rebellion and other charges in his short-lived declaration of martial law last week.

Yoon's martial law decree last Tuesday, which brought special forces troops into Seoul streets, plunged South Korea into political turmoil and caused worry among its key diplomatic partners and neighbours.

On Saturday, Yoon avoided an Opposition-led bid to impeach him, with most governing party lawmakers boycotting a parliamentary vote. But the opposition parties vowed to submit a new impeachment motion against him this week.

Bae Sang-up, a Justice Ministry official, told a parliamentary hearing that it banned Yoon from leaving the country following requests by police, prosecutors and an anti-corruption agency as they expand their probes into the circumstances surrounding Yoon's power grab.

PHOTO: X

On Monday, a senior National Police Agency officer told local reporters in a background briefing that police can also detain Yoon if conditions are met.

While a sitting South Korean president has immunity from prosecution while in office, that does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason. This means that Yoon can be questioned and detained by police over his martial law decree, but many observers doubt that police will forcefully detain him or search his office because of the potential for clashes with his presidential security service. *—PTI*

UKRAINE WAR

Trump threatens to withdraw US from NATO

WASHINGTON, 9 DEC

US President-elect Donald Trump on Sunday said he will reduce military aid to Ukraine and pull the United States out of NATO if an Russia and Ukraine war is not ended.

Those are two threats that have alarmed Ukraine, NATO allies and many in the US national security community.

He aldo pushed Russian leader Vladimir Putin to act to reach an immediate ceasefire with Ukraine, describing it as part of his active efforts as president-elect to end the war despite being weeks from taking office.

"Zelenskyy and Ukraine would like to make a deal and stop the madness," Trump wrote on social media, referring to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In a television interview that aired Sunday, Trump also

He refused to say if he had spoken to Putin since winning election in November.

"I don't want to say anything about that, because I don't want to do anything that could impede the negotiation," Trump said.

Trump's call for an immediate ceasefire went beyond the public policy stands taken by the Biden administration and Ukraine and drew a cautious response from Zelenskyy.

It also marks Trump wading unusually deeply into efforts before his 20 January inauguration to resolve one of the major global crises facing the lame-duck Biden administration. *—PTI*

Canada, Mexico should become US states: Trump

WASHINGTON, 9 DEC

Claiming that the US is subsidising its two neighbours Canada and Mexico to the tune of USD 100 billion and USD 300 billion, respectively, incoming US President Donald Trump on Sunday said that if that is the case then these two countries better be a part of America.

Trump, 78, has threatened to impose hefty tariffs on both Canada and Mexico if they don't stop the flow of illegal immigrants into the US through their territories. "If we're going to subsidise them, let them become a state (of the US)," Trump told NBC News in an interview. Trump refuted the observations by some American CEOs that tariffs would cost the US and increase the cost of common commodities thus putting a strain on common people. *—PTI*

Chinese naval ships surround Taiwan

BEIJING, 9 DEC

China's military appears to be preparing for widely anticipated drills in response to a recent visit by Taiwan's president to Hawaii and Guam.

Taiwan's defence ministry said Monday that it detected Chinese naval and coast guard ships entering the Taiwan Strait and the western Pacific and that China had restricted airspace along its southeast coast through Wednesday.

PHOTO: X@SPRINTERFAMILY

There was no immediate confirmation from the Chinese side. A Taiwan defence ministry statement said it has set up an emergency response centre and launched combat readiness exercises.

It did not say what those exercises entailed. The Chinese government says Taiwan is part of its territory and opposes American support and military sales to the self-governing island. *—PTI*

10 dead as flash floods hit Indonesia's Java

SUKABUMI, 9 DEC

Indonesian rescuers recovered 10 bodies that were swept away in flash floods or buried under tons of mud and rocks that hit hilly villages on the country's main island of Java, officials said Monday. Two people are still missing.

Torrential rains since last week have caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through more than 170 villages in Sukabumi district of West Java province, as mud, rocks and trees tumbled down mountainside hamlets, said Lt Col Yudi Hariyanto, who heads a rescue command post in Sukabumi.

PHOTO: PTI

Landslides, flash floods and strong winds devastated 172 villages and forced more than 3,000 people to flee to temporary government shelters, Hariyanto said. Authorities have warned nearly 1,000 people to evacuate. *—PTI*

'Polarisation' is Merriam-Webster's word of the year

WASHINGTON, 9 DEC

The results of the 2024 US presidential election rattled the country and sent shockwaves across the world — or were cause for celebration, depending on who you ask. Is it any surprise then that the Merriam-Webster word of the year is "polarisation"? "Polarisation means division, but it's a very specific kind of division," said Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large, in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press ahead of Monday's announcement. "Polarisation means that we are tending toward the extremes rather than toward the centre." The Merriam-Webster entry for "polarisation" reflects scientific and metaphorical definitions. It's most commonly used to mean "causing strong disagreement between opposing factions or groupings". *—PTI*

AMID PROTEST

Georgian journalists allege brutal beatings

TBILISI, 9 DEC

Tens of thousands of people joined an 11th straight day of protests in Georgia on Sunday after the governing party moved to suspend negotiations on joining the European Union, while a separate demonstration decried violence against Georgian journalists covering the rallies.

Police have been using increasing force in their attempts to curb the demonstrations, which have centred on the parliament building in the capital, Tbilisi.

Riot police have used water cannons and tear gas every day to disperse the rallies, beating scores of protesters who threw fireworks at police officers and built barricades on the Georgian capital's central boulevard.

A demonstrator with a Georgian flag stands under running water from a water cannon rallying outside the Parliament's building **PHOTO: PTI**

At Saturday night's demonstration, reporter Maka Chikhladze and her colleague from the independent Pirveli TV channel were targeted by a violent mob, Chikhladze told The Associated Press.

Chikladze said her colleague managed to capture footage of men dressed in black who were beating demonstrators before they turned on the pair, violently pushing Chikhladze to the ground. She later told AP that her colleague sustained a head injury and had his camera stolen. Chikhladze charged that Georgia's government was using bands of thugs to deter people from attending anti-government rallies, an allegation denied by representatives of the Georgian Dream party.

President Zourabichvili, who plays a largely ceremonial role, refused to recognise the official election results and contested them before the Constitutional Court, which rejected her appeal earlier this week. The EU granted Georgia candidate status in December 2023 on condition that the country meets the bloc's recommendations, but put its accession on hold and cut financial support in June after the passage of a "foreign influence" law that was widely seen as a blow to democratic freedoms. *—PTI*

Jay-Z, 'Diddy' accused of raping 13-year-old girl

WASHINGTON DC, 9 DEC

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

American rapper and music producer Jay-Z has been accused in a civil lawsuit of raping a 13-year-old with hip-hop star Sean "Diddy" Combs in the year 2000, court documents show, a claim the artist strongly denied.

An updated civil complaint filed on Sunday alleges that Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter, as well as Combs, raped the girl at an afterparty following the MTV Video Music Awards in September 2000.

"Another celebrity stood by and watched as Combs and Carter took turns assaulting the minor.

Many others were present at the after party, but did nothing to stop the assault," the complaint reads.

"Carter has been with Combs during many such instances described herein. Both perpetrators must face justice."

Combs, who is also known as Diddy, is currently in jail facing charges of sex trafficking and racketeering.

The plaintiff is not identified in the lawsuit. Jay-Z fired back at the lawyer bringing the case, accusing him of being a "deplorable human".

Federal prosecutors allege that Combs, 55, sexually abused women and coerced them into drug-fuelled sex parties using threats and violence. *—Al Jazeera*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold declines ₹190 to ₹78,960/10g; silver climbs ₹350

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Gold prices declined Rs 190 to Rs 78,960 per 10g in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity settled at Rs 79,150 per 10g on Friday. However, silver climbed Rs 350 to Rs 93,850 per kg on Monday. The metal had ended at Rs 93,500 per kg in the previous session. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 190 to Rs 78,560 per 10 grams. On Friday, the yellow metal closed at Rs 78,750 per 10g. —*PTI*

Rupee drops 8 paise to close at 84.74 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 9 DEC

The rupee depreciated 8 paise to close at 84.74 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, dragged down by fresh foreign fund outflows and a muted trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the rupee remains in a weakening mode due to dollar demand from importers and foreign banks. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.70 and touched the lowest level of 84.73 against the greenback during intra-day trade. The unit ended the session at 84.74 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 8 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee appreciated by 5 paise to settle at 84.66 against the US dollar. On 4 December, the rupee had slumped to its all-time low of 84.76 (provisional) against the US dollar. —*PTI*

Inventurus Rs 2,498-cr IPO to open on 12 Dec

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Inventurus Knowledge Solutions Ltd has announced a price band of Rs 1,265 - Rs1,329 for its Rs 2,498 crore initial public offering (IPO), which opens for public subscription from 12 to 16 December. The company will hold a bidding round for anchor investors on 11 December.

The IPO comprises an Offer For Sale of 1.88 crore equity shares from promoters and shareholders, reducing from an earlier 2.82 crore shares, with no fresh issue. All funds raised will go to the selling shareholders, as Inventurus will not receive any proceeds.

Promoters currently hold around 70 per cent of the company, which is backed by prominent figures like Rekha Jhunjhunwala. The IPO aims to increase visibility and liquidity. —*PTI*

Hyundai plans to install 600 charging stations

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) on Monday said it will install around 600 public EV fast charging stations across the country in the next seven years. The company plans to have a network of 50 public fast charging stations by the end of December 2024, the automaker said in a statement. The ambitious initiative underscores the company's commitment to fostering sustainable mobility and is poised to play a pivotal role in India's transition to cleaner energy, it added. HMIL Function Head (Corporate Planning) Jae Wan Ryu said the EV market in India is expected to grow robustly by 2030. Studies conducted by HMIL have highlighted that customers are apprehensive about driving their EVs for long-distance commutes on highways because of a lack of charging infrastructure, he said. "Keeping this in mind, the company has taken the initiative of installing fast EV chargers on key highways and major cities," Ryu said. —*PTI*

Govt allows Adani's Port in Andhra to import petroleum

After the order, Adani Ports' shares rose by over 1 per cent

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The central government has allowed the Adani Group-owned port at Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh to import petroleum into India by sea in public interest.

Considering the necessity of importing petroleum in the public interest, the central government extended the notification for Krishnapatnam Port in Andhra Pradesh (M/S Adani Krishnapatnam Port Limited) to import petroleum into India by sea.

These imports shall be by operations permitted in the Navigational Safety at Ports Committee (NSPC) for the period from 25 August, 2024, to March 1, 2026.

This additional port will help India refine more crude oil on its east coast, and go a long way in energy cost efficiency amid rising international fuel prices.

The country imports oil and gas from various geographical regions including countries from the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America, South America and South-East Asia. India depends on imports for over 80 per cent of its crude oil requirement.

At the same time, various steps have been taken by the government to increase the production of domestic crude oil and bring down imports.

Adani Group company Adani Ports and SEZ represents a large network of ports with India's largest SEZ at Mundra.

This additional port will help India refine more crude oil on its east coast, and go a long way in energy cost PHOTO: X

- Adani Group company Adani Ports and SEZ represents a large network of ports with India's largest SEZ at Mundra. The port business is integral to the conglomerate's logistics business and is India's largest private port operator with a presence across 13 locations.

The port business is integral to the conglomerate's logistics business and is India's largest private port operator with a presence across 13 locations. The notification to allow continued petroleum imports at Krishnapatnam Port had a positive impact on the shares of Adani Ports, which gained over 1 per cent intraday on the Bombay Stock Exchange —*ANI*

GLOBAL INVESTMENT SUMMIT

Adani, Aditya Birla and Mahindra Group to invest in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, 9 DEC

Major conglomerates including the Adani Group, Aditya Birla Group, and Mahindra Group have unveiled significant investment plans in Rajasthan, promising to bolster the state's economy and create thousands of jobs.

The Adani Group announced plans to invest Rs 7.5 lakh crore across various sectors, with Managing Director Karan Adani stating that 50 per cent of this total would be realised within the next five years. The ambitious investment aims to establish the world's largest integrated energy ecosystem in Rajasthan, featuring 100 gigawatts of renewable energy, 2 million tonnes of hydrogen production, and 1.8 gigawatts of hydro power capacity. Adani emphasised that these ventures will transform Rajasthan into an "oasis of green jobs".

Similarly, the Aditya Birla Group revealed its intention to invest Rs 50,000 crore over the coming years, focusing on cement, telecommunications, and renewable energy. Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla highlighted plans to enhance cement production capacity by an additional 10 million tonnes and invest Rs 6,000 crore in renewable energy initiatives.

Finally, Mahindra Group's solar division has pledged Rs 11,000 crore to expand solar capacity in the state. Chairman Anand Mahindra noted the establishment of 1.1 gigawatt of solar capacity to date and highlighted plans to create 2.8 gigawatts more, generating 5,000 direct jobs with future objectives to increase employment further. These announcements at the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit signal an optimistic economic outlook for the state, with innovative projects aimed at sustainable growth and job creation. —*PTI*

RS 1,986 CRORE RISE

Paytm shares soar 3% to 52-week high

Paytm's market valuation is now Rs 64,109.58 crore PHOTO: X

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Shares of One97 Communications, the parent company of the Paytm brand, surged over 3 per cent on the stock market on Monday, following the board's approval for the sale of its stake in SoftBank's fintech subsidiary, PayPay Corporation. The company's shares reached a 52-week high of Rs 1,007 on both the BSE and NSE.

This impressive rise saw Paytm's market valuation increase by Rs 1,986.32 crore, bringing it to a total of Rs 64,109.58 crore. In contrast, the broader market saw the 30-share BSE Sensex drop by 199.98 points, or 0.24 per cent, to 81,509.14, while the NSE Nifty fell by 54.15 points, or 0.22 per cent, to 24,623.65.

In a regulatory filing on Friday, One97 Communications confirmed the approval of the sale of Stock Acquisition Rights (SARs) in PayPay Corporation. The company currently holds a 7.2 per cent stake in the Japanese fintech firm. According to statements from Paytm's senior officials, the stake was valued at approximately Rs 2,000 crore, roughly equivalent to USD 236 million, as of July 2024. This strategic move marks a significant development for Paytm as it continues to navigate its position in the competitive fintech landscape. —*PTI*

- This strategic move marks a significant development for Paytm as it continues to navigate its position in the competitive fintech landscape.

Mkt tanks 200 pts on selling in bluechip stocks

MUMBAI, 9 DEC

The Indian equity benchmarks, Sensex and Nifty, closed lower on Monday, influenced by declines in several blue-chip stocks such as Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, and Axis Bank, amid a mixed global market backdrop.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 200.66 points, or 0.25 per cent, to finish at 81,508.46 after fluctuating between a high of 81,783.28 and a low of 81,411.55 during the trading session. Similarly, the NSE Nifty decreased by 58.80 points, or 0.24 per cent, closing at 24,619.

Key laggards included Hindustan Unilever, Tata Motors, Axis Bank, Nestle India, Asian Paints, ITC, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, and State Bank of India. In contrast, shares of Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, and PowerGrid were among the gainers.

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, remarked that the markets witnessed a range-bound session, staying predominantly in negative territory due to a lack of investor enthusiasm following last week's rally.

In the broader Asian markets, Seoul and Shanghai reported losses, while Tokyo and Hong Kong saw gains. European markets were trading higher, and US markets ended positively on Friday. Global oil prices increased by 0.89 per cent, reaching USD 71.75 per barrel. —*PTI*

Foreign Institutional Investors turned net sellers, offloading equities worth Rs 1,830.31 crore PHOTO: X

Godrej shares drop 11% amid weak demand

Shares of Godrej Consumer Products fell by 11 per cent on Monday, following the company's announcement of subdued demand conditions in India over the past few months. The stock dropped by 10.81 per cent to Rs 1,102 on the BSE, prompting declines across the FMCG sector. Marico saw a 4.59 per cent drop, Tata Consumer fell by 3.57 per cent, and Colgate-Palmolive declined by 3.55 per cent. Hindustan Unilever, Dabur India, and Britannia also faced losses. The BSE FMCG Index fell by 2.01 per cent, while the overall BSE Sensex dropped by 0.13 per cent. Godrej Consumer noted that adverse weather and inflationary pressures have further impacted growth in its Home Insecticides segment, which comprises a significant portion of its business. —*PTI*

CEAT shares surge by 12% after Camso acquisition

Shares of tyre manufacturer CEAT soared over 12 per cent on Monday, following the announcement of its agreement with Michelin to acquire the Camso brand's Off-highway Tyres (OHT) and tracks business for approximately USD 225 million (Rs 1,905 crore). On the BSE, CEAT's shares rose by 9.64 per cent to Rs 3,390.15 each, reaching a 52-week high of Rs 3,466.40 during intraday trading. Similarly, on the NSE, the stock increased by 10.77 per cent, peaking at Rs 3,469. This acquisition will enhance CEAT's presence in the lucrative OHT market, providing access to a global customer base and positioning the company for future growth in this expanding sector, particularly within the construction and mining industries. —*PTI*

Airtel flags 8B spam calls in 90 days

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Monday said its network has flagged a staggering eight billion spam calls and called out 0.8 billion spam SMSes within two and a half months of the launch of its spam-fighting AI-powered solution.

Leveraging an advanced algorithm, the AI-powered network has successfully identified close to one million spammers every day, the company informed in a release. Notably, six per cent of all calls and two per cent of all SMSes on the Airtel network have been identified as spam.

Delhi had the dubious distinction of accounting for a maximum number of the spam calls received and originated.

The company, in the last 2.5 months, has alerted close to 252 million unique customers to these suspicious calls and has observed that there has been a 12 per cent decline in the number of customers answering them. "Bharti Airtel, India's first spam-fighting network, has flagged a staggering 8 billion spam calls and 0.8 billion spam SMSes within two and a half months of launching its AI-powered, spam-fighting solution," the release said.

Airtel observed that 35 per cent of the spammers have used landline telephones.

Customers in Delhi received the maximum number of spam calls, followed by AP and western UP. —*PTI*

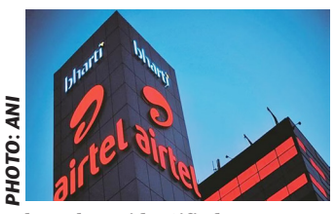


PHOTO: ANI

GST OFFICERS DETECT RS 35,000 CRORE ITC EVASION

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

GST officers have detected cases of ITC evasion of Rs 35,132 crore by 17,818 fake firms between April and October and arrested 69 persons, Parliament was informed on Monday.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said regular action is taken to detect fake firms through data analytics and other intelligence by the central and state authorities.

Also, a coordinated special drive was launched between August 16 and October 30 to detect fake firms. "A total of 18,876 ITC fraud cases were detected involving 17,818 fake firms with suspected ITC evasion of Rs 35,132 crore during fiscal 2024–25 (April–October)," Chaudhary said.

This has saved Rs 6,484 crore of which Rs 5,422 crore by blocking of ITC and Rs 1,062 crore by way of recovery. A total of 69 arrests have been made in the cases during the current fiscal till October. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

RBI GUV'S LAST DAY

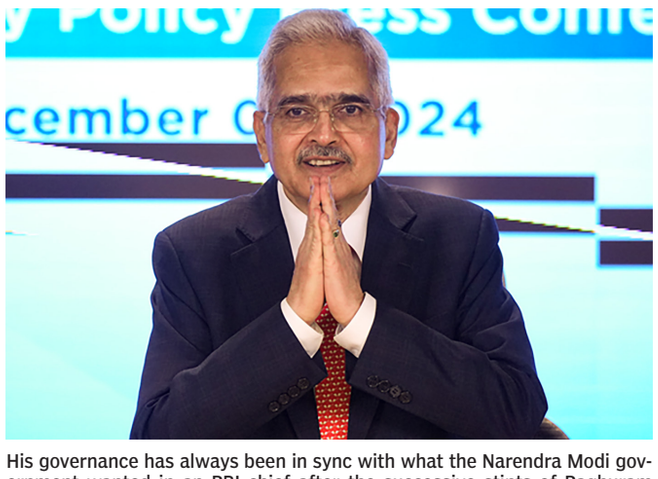
Shaktikanta Das: The man behind GST, note ban & Covid strategy

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Shaktikanta Das, who will demit office as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday, was the key man behind the planning and execution of the demonetisation drive and rollout of the landmark Goods and Services Tax (GST). At the RBI, he steered India's monetary policy response during the challenging period of the pandemic.

Das, 67, a career bureaucrat, was put into the high job of the RBI Governor when Urjit Patel abruptly resigned in December 2018.

A 1980-batch Tamil Nadu cadre IAS officer, Das, was economic affairs secretary when the government suddenly scrapped high-value currency notes in November 2016.



His governance has always been in sync with what the Narendra Modi government wanted in an RBI chief after the successive stints of Raghuram Rajan and UrjitPatel PHOTO: PTI

While the government justified the move as aiming at curbing black money, corruption, and terrorism financing, many criticised it for the hardship it brought to the common man. Das, however, defended the decision.

He also played a key role when multiple indirect taxes were merged into one GST, which came into effect on 1 July, 2017.

As the RBI Governor, he focused on maintaining financial stability, curbing inflation and promoting economic growth. While he took several measures to address the liquidity crunch in the non-banking financial sector and took steps to strengthen the regulatory framework for banks and non-banking financial companies, the highlight of his stint was dealing with Covid-19 pandemic impact.

Barely a year after Das took charge as the RBI governor, Covid hit. Das chose to cut the policy repo rate to a historic low of 4 per cent.

With the revival of the economy, the Das-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) was quick to raise interest rates starting May 2022 to check inflation.

The government extended his tenure for another three years in 2021. His governance has always been in sync with what the Narendra Modi government wanted in an RBI chief after the successive stints of Raghuram Rajan and Urjit Patel, which were marred by constant conflicts between the RBI and the North Block, the home to the Ministry of Finance. —*PTI*

- Das, 67, a career bureaucrat, was put into the high job of the RBI Governor when Urjit Patel abruptly resigned in December 2018. As the RBI Governor, he focused on maintaining financial stability, curbing inflation & promoting economic growth.

PHOTO: X

Baseball star Juan Soto lands $765M deal with NY Mets

NEW YORK, 9 DEC

The New York Mets have made history by reportedly signing Dominican baseball superstar Juan Soto on a 15-year, $765 million (around Rs 6,400 crore) deal – the biggest ever in professional sports – leading oddsmakers to tab New York as a serious contender to go all the way next season. Major League Baseball's (MLB) official website and multiple media outlets in the United States reported Soto's blockbuster move on Sunday. ESPN reported that Soto's Mets contract could eventually be worth more than $800m if certain benchmarks were met, eclipsing the USD700million, 10-year contract the Los Angeles Dodgers signed with Japanese star Shohei Ohtani last year. Soto had entered free agency after playing last season for the New York Yankees, who had hoped to re-sign the 26-year-old. *—Al Jazeera*

Rabiot helps Marseille beat Saint-Etienne

PARIS, 9 DEC

France midfielder Adrien Rabiot grabbed his first goal for Marseille in a 2-0 win at Saint-Etienne which helped the southern club retain second place in the French league. The former Juventus player latched onto an astute pass over the defence from striker Neal Maupay, took one touch to control the ball and then volleyed it in with his left foot in the 17th minute. Marseille striker Mason Greenwood netted the second in the 65th after earning a penalty and scoring at the second attempt, after goalkeeper Gautier Larsonneur saved his spot kick. It was his 10th league goal since an offseason move from Manchester United, moving him one behind Ligue 1 top scorer Jonathan David. *—PTI*

Kapil urges Kambli to address his health issues

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The legendary Kapil Dev on Monday urged former India batter Vinod Kambli to address his health issues, saying he needs to make efforts to overcome the crisis. Kambli, 52, has been struggling with alcohol-related and other health issues. He recently appeared frail during a public event, held in memory of legendary coach Ramakant Achrekar. He was seen refusing to let go of his childhood friend Sachin Tendulkar. Expressing sadness over Kambli's condition, Kapil emphasised the need for self-help alongside external support. "We should all try to support him. But more than us, he has to support himself. We can't look after anybody if that person can't look after himself," Kapil said. Kambli, a former left-handed batter, has battled numerous health challenges over the years. *—PTI*

Norris wins to seal constructors' title for McLaren in F1

ABU DHABI, 9 DEC

Lando Norris ended McLaren's 26-year wait for the Formula 1 constructors' title as he won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday. There was drama at the start as champion Max Verstappen collided with Oscar Piastri's second-place McLaren at the first corner, sending both cars into a spin. With Piastri dropped to the back of the field, that meant McLaren's title hopes depended on race leader Norris. Norris held on for the win with Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr. in second and Charles Leclerc surging up to third from 19th on the grid. Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton was fourth in his last race for Mercedes before joining Ferrari next year. *—PTI*

Gukesh loses to Liren in 12th game

Two players are tied at 6 points each with just 2 games left in World Chess Championship

SINGAPORE, 9 DEC

Indian challenger D Gukesh lost the 12th game against defending champion Ding Liren of China to allow his opponent bounce back and level the World Chess Championship match here on Monday.

The 18-year-old Gukesh was ahead by one point after he notched his second win of the match on Sunday, which came after seven consecutive draws, but Liren's win on Monday brought the things on an even keel.

The two players are now tied at 6 points each with just two games left in the 14-round classical time control format, still shy of 1.5 points in order to win the title.

Irrespective of what happens in the next game on Wednesday, the match will go the distance (14 games) and more likely there will be tie-breaker -- where games are of shorter duration -- to determine the winner.

The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game before Gukesh emerged victorious in the third game. The second, and the fourth to 10th games were drawn.

In what was the first victory for Liren with his white pieces, Gukesh's preparation did not come as good as the other 11 games that he played here.

Gukesh started to miss out creating counter play in the middle game as white played just normal developing moves.

By the 15th move, though less on time on the clock, white had a small advantage as a central breakthrough looked inevitable, giving Liren the space advantage.

Gukesh's 17th move did not help his cause as white was able to get the desired break in the centre. The game ended through a fine tactic by Liren who sacrificed a rook to force matters. The game ended in 39 moves. *—PTI*

FACT SHEET

Game 11:	9 DEC
White:	Gukesh D
Black:	Ding Liren
Result:	1-0
Game length:	29 moves
Opening:	Reti Opening
Variation:	Reversed Blumenfeld Gambit
Match score:	6-6

GUKESH D **6-6** DING LIREN

0	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	0			
1	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1			

Aarit youngest Indian to beat Grandmaster

BHUBANESWAR, 9 DEC

Nine-year-old Delhi boy Aarit Kapil has become the youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster as he emerged victorious against Raset Ziatdinov of United States in the ninth and penultimate round of the KIIT International open tournament here.

At 9 years, 2 months and 18 days, Aarit is the youngest Indian and third in the world to beat a GM under the classical time control.

The youngest player in the world to beat a GM is Indian-origin Singapore boy Ashwath Kaushik who won against Jacek Stupa of Poland when he was just 8 years and six months old earlier this year.

Ziatdinov, 66, is certainly past his prime if the game was any indication. As is usually the case when an experienced GM plays against a youngster, Ziatdinov did many things right positionally to get the upper hand thanks to his better pawn structure.

Nine-year-old Delhi boy Aarit Kapil
PHOTO: X@WORLD_DAIS

To Aarit's credit, he fought on after standing slightly worse with his white pieces. It was a long-drawn endgame wherein Ziatdinov made the final mistake and lost a knight on Sunday.

The resulting position just needed decent calculation and the young lad from Delhi had no troubles whatsoever in converting his advantage in to a well-deserved win. The game lasted 63 moves. While the victory places Aarit among the young elite talents, how he performs in upcoming tournaments is the key. *—PTI*

BCCI appoints Devajit as acting secretary

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The BCCI has appointed Devajit Saikia as the board's acting secretary by president Roger Binny, replacing Jay Shah who recently took over as the new ICC chair from 1 December.

Saikia, who hails from Assam, is a former first-class cricketer. He is currently the BCCI joint-secretary.

Binny used his constitutional powers to appoint Saikia as acting secretary in a stop-gap arrangement till a permanent secretary is appointed under the BCCI rules and regulations.

In a letter addressed to Saikia, which is in possession of PTI, Binny cited clause 7(1)(d) of the BCCI constitution to hand secretarial powers to Saikia, who is also the Advocate General of Assam.

"The president shall in the event of vacancy or indisposition shall delegate the functions to another office bearer until the vacancy is duly filled up or indisposition ceases.

Devajit Saikia *PHOTO: X*

- Devajit Saikia, who hails from Assam, is a former first-class cricketer. He is currently the BCCI joint-secretary. He replaces Jay Shah who took over as the ICC chairman on 1 Dec

"Accordingly, I delegate the functions of secretary to you till the post is filled up by processes laid down as per BCCI rules and regulations. I am confident you will perform the duties to the best of your abilities and with aplomb," Binny wrote to Saikia. *—PTI*

ICC fines Siraj, sanctions Head

ADELAIDE, 9 DEC

Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj was fined 20 per cent of his match fee, while Australian batter Travis Head was also "sanctioned" by the ICC for indulging in a heated exchange of words during the just-concluded day-night Test here.

Siraj and Head were held guilty of breaching the world body's code of conduct following a disciplinary hearing on Monday.

"Siraj has been penalised 20 per cent of his match fee after being found guilty of breaching article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel," the ICC said in a statement.

The cited rule relates to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon dismissal."

The ICC said Head too was "sanctioned" for breaching Article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel.

However, he escaped a fine for breaching the rule that relates to the "abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an international match."

Siraj and Head also received one demerit point each on their disciplinary records, marking their first offence in the last 24 months.

Head and Siraj had a brief showdown on day two of the match that Australia won by 10 wickets on Sunday. Head had struck a splendid 141-ball knock of 140 before being castled by Siraj, who went on to give him an aggressive send-off following an exchange of words. The Indian endured booes from the Adelaide crowd following the confrontation. *—PTI*

Travis Head and Siraj had a brief showdown on day 2 of Test match in Adelaide that Australia won by 10 wickets on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Rohit doesn't need to prove himself: Kapil

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

'Let's not doubt Rohit Sharma's ability to bounce back', said the legendary Kapil Dev, who also felt that underfire India skipper doesn't need to prove himself at this stage of his career.

Rohit, who managed scores of 3 and 6 in the the Adelaide pink-ball Test after dropping down the batting order, is being criticized by fans and former players for being subdued.

India lost the game by 10 wickets in just two and a half days.

"He doesn't have to prove himself. He has done this for many, many years, so let's not doubt somebody. I won't doubt him. I hope his form comes back, that's important," Kapil said during the launch of the Vishwa Samudra Open, a PGTI event. *—PTI*

India beat Sri Lanka 5-0 in deaf bilateral cricket series

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The Indian deaf cricket team recorded a 5-0 win over Sri Lanka in a bilateral one-day series held here from 2 to 8 December.

The Indian squad was led by Virendra Singh and included 15 players from across the country. Sri Lanka were led by Gimadu Malkam.

The Indian team won the fifth and final ODI by 13 runs. Having posted 289 in 49.5 overs in the first innings, India restricted Sri Lanka to 276 all-out in 48.4 overs to notch a thrilling win.

India's Sai Akash was named the player of the match for the fifth game while Sri Lanka's Alanrose Kalep was adjudged the player of the series for his 12 wickets in four innings.

The Indian squad was led by Virendra Singh and included 15 players from across the country *PHOTO: X@OFFICIAL_ODCA*

India's Santosh Kumar Mahopatra was named the best batter of the series for scoring 325 runs in five outings with one century and two fifties.

The Indian team had trained under head coach Dev Dutt and assistant coach Susheel Gupta in the national capital from 25 November to 1 December. The series was hosted by the Indian Deaf Cricket Association, a member of the Deaf International Cricket Council (DICC). *—PTI*

South Africa beat Sri Lanka in 2nd test, boost WTC hopes

GQEBERHA, 9 DEC

South Africa beat Sri Lanka by 109 runs on the last morning of the second cricket test at St George's Park and swept the series 2-0 on Monday.

The odds favored South Africa, which needed five more wickets, while Sri Lanka needed 143 more runs in a chase of 348 and its last recognised batters were in the middle.

The Proteas ended the fightbacks of captain Dhananjaya de Silva and Kusal Mendis in the first half hour, exposed the tail, and finished off Sri Lanka for 238 before lunch.

South Africa also consolidated its hopes of qualifying for a first World Test Championship final by moving to the top of the standings with two more home tests to come.*—Agenices*

MISSED GAMES

Mbappé reaffirms his commitment to France

PARIS, 9 DEC

Kylian Mbappé has reaffirmed his commitment to France despite missing recent games, saying "there's nothing bigger than the national team."

The 2018 World Cup winner was left out for Nations League matches against Israel and Italy last month, with coach Didier Deschamps saying " it's better that way " and adding that the player's struggles were physical and mental.

Mbappé is France's captain and was also absent from a previous gathering in October because of a minor thigh injury, but nevertheless played for Real Madrid.

"I've always said there's nothing bigger than the national team," Mbappé said on Sunday night during a television interview with Canal Plus. "My love for the France team hasn't changed."

Deschamps' reference to his mental state led some observers to speculate Mbappé suffered from depression. He explained that he has not. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X@CENTREGOALS

FORMULA 1 IN 2025

Close racing, Lewis Hamilton at Ferrari & plenty of new faces

Lewis Hamilton *X@PETAITOKSF1*

ABU DHABI, 9 DEC

Even before he'd parked his car after winning the last Formula 1 race of 2024, Lando Norris made a vow to be champion in 2025.

"Next year is going to be my year, too," Norris, who was runner-up to Max Verstappen this year said.

After four different teams won races in 2024, next year could see an even closer contest for the title. Lewis Hamilton will be aiming for an eighth career championship at his new team, Ferrari, and there'll be ambitious young drivers joining the grid.

Major rule changes in F1 tend to shake up the established order, but can let one team gain a big advantage. When the same rules are in place for a while, teams tend to be more evenly matched. The season-long competition for the title in 2021 between Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton preceded a rule change for 2022.

"I've certainly not come out on top as often as I would have liked in certain moments as a driver, especially in my fights against Max. As much as it hurts sometimes, I'm probably happy about it now that I'm going to go into next season knowing that I can fight," Norris said.

Carlos Sainz Jr. said his new team, Williams, is "preparing to maximize that chance" in 2026. Aston Martin has Adrian Newey, widely considered F1's greatest designer, heading up its development after he left Red Bull.

The biggest rookie class in years arrives in F1 with plenty of hype as 18-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli steps up from Formula 2 to replace Hamilton at Mercedes. Oliver Bearman joins Haas after impressive stand-in drives this year, while F2 champion Gabriel Bortoleto moves to Sauber.

Ten-time GP winner Valtteri Bottas is likely heading back to Mercedes as a reserve next year after leaving Sauber. Kevin Magnussen, Zhou Guanyu and Franco Colapinto are also without race seats for 2025.Then there's Sergio Perez. Second to Verstappen in the 2023 standings, the Mexican driver was nowhere near his Red Bull teammate's pace this season and has faced repeated speculation he will be dropped for 2025 despite a contract extension agreed in June. *—PTI*

PHOTO: F1 CHRONICLE